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**REYNARD THE FOX**  
**OR**  
**THE GHOST HEATH RUN**



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TORONTO

# REYNARD THE FOX

OR

THE GHOST HEATH RUN

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

AUTHOR OF

"THE EVERLASTING MERCY," "THE WIDOW  
IN THE BYE STREET," ETC.

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

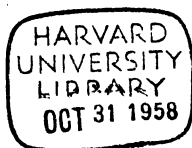
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## **PART I**



REYNARD THE FOX,  
OR  
THE GHOST HEATH RUN

The meet was at "The Cock and Pye  
By Charles and Martha Enderby,"  
The grey, three-hundred-year-old inn  
Long since the haunt of Benjamin  
The highwayman, who rode the bay.  
The tavern fronts the coaching way,  
The mail changed horses there of old.  
It has a strip of grassy mould  
In front of it, a broad green strip.  
A trough, where horses' muzzles dip,  
Stands opposite the tavern front,  
And there that morning came the hunt,  
To fill that quiet width of road

As full of men as Framilode

Is full of sea when tide is in.

The stables were alive with din

From dawn until the time of meeting.

A pad-groom gave a cloth a beating,

Knocking the dust out with a stake.

Two men cleaned stalls with fork and rake,

And one went whistling to the pump,

The handle whined, ker-lump, ker-lump,

The water splashed into the pail,

And, as he went, it left a trail,

Lipped over on the yard's bricked paving.

Two grooms (sent on before) were shaving

There in the yard, at glasses propped

On jutting bricks; they scraped and  
stropped,

And felt their chins and leaned and peered,

A woodland day was what they feared

(As second horsemen), shaving there.

Then, in the stalls where hunters were,  
Straw rustled as the horses shifted,  
The hayseeds ticked and haystraws drifted  
From racks as horses tugged their feed.  
Slow gulping sounds of steady greed  
Came from each stall, and sometimes  
stampings,  
Whinnies (at well-known steps) and ramp-  
ings  
To see the horse in the next stall.'

Outside, the spangled cock did call  
To scattering grain that Martha flung.  
And many a time a mop was wrung  
By Susan ere the floor was clean.  
The harness room, that busy scene,  
Clinked and chinked from ostlers bright-  
ening  
Rings and bits with dips of whitening,  
Rubbing fox-flecks out of stirrups,

Dumbing buckles of their chirrups  
By the touch of oily feathers.  
Some, with stag's bones rubbed at leathers,  
Brushed at saddle-flaps or hove  
Saddle linings to the stove.  
Blue smoke from strong tobacco drifted  
Out of the yard, the passers sniff it,  
Mixed with the strong ammonia flavour  
Of horses' stables and the savour  
Of saddle-paste and polish spirit  
Which put the gleam on flap and tirrit.  
The grooms in shirts with rolled-up sleeves,  
Belted by girths of coloured weaves,  
Groomed the clipped hunters in their stalls.  
One said "My dad cured saddle galls,  
He called it Doctor Barton's cure ;  
Hog's lard and borax, laid on pure."  
And others said, "Ge' back, my son,"  
"Stand over, girl ; now, girl, ha' done."  
"Now, boy, no snapping ; gently. Crikes

He gives a rare pinch when he likes."

"Drawn blood? I thought he looked a  
biter."

"I give 'em all sweet spit of nitre  
For that, myself : that sometimes cures."

"Now, Beauty, mind them feet of yours."

They groomed, and sissed with hissing notes  
To keep the dust out of their throats.

There came again and yet again  
The feed-box lid, the swish of grain,  
Or Joe's boots stamping in the loft,  
The hay-fork's stab and then the soft  
Hay's scratching slither down the shoot.  
Then with a thud some horse's foot  
Stamped, and the gulping munch again  
Resumed its lippings at the grain.

The road outside the inn was quiet  
Save for the poor, mad, restless pyat



Hopping his hanging wicker-cage.  
No calmativè of sleep or sage  
Will cure the fever to be free.  
He shook the wicker ceaselessly  
Now up, now down, but never out  
On wind-waves, being blown about,  
Looking for dead things good to eat.  
His cage was strewn with scattered wheat.

At ten o'clock, the Doctor's lad  
Brought up his master's hunting pad  
And put him in a stall, and leaned  
Against the stall, and sissed, and cleaned  
The port and cannons of his curb.  
He chewed a sprig of smelling herb.  
He sometimes stopped, and spat, and chid  
The silly things his master did.

At twenty past, old Baldock strode  
His ploughman's straddle down the road.  
An old man with a gaunt, burnt face ;

His eyes rapt back on some far place,  
Like some starved, half-mad saint in bliss  
In God's world through the rags of this.  
He leaned upon a stake of ash  
Cut from a sapling : many a gash  
Was in his old, full-skirted coat.  
The twisted muscles in his throat  
Moved, as he swallowed, like taut cord.  
His oaken face was seamed and gored.  
He halted by the inn and stared  
On that far bliss, that place prepared  
Beyond his eyes, beyond his mind.

Then Thomas Copp, of Cowfoot's Wynd,  
Drove up ; and stopped to take a glass.  
"I hope they'll gallop on my grass,"  
He said, "My little girl does sing  
To see the red coats galloping.  
It's good for grass, too, to be trodden  
Except they poach it, where it's sodden."

Then Billy Waldrist, from the Lynn,  
With Jockey Hill, from Pitts, came in  
And had a sip of gin and stout  
To help the jockey's sweatings out.  
"Rare day for scent," the jockey said.

A pony like a feather bed  
On four short sticks, took place aside.  
The little girl who rode astride  
Watched everything with eyes that glowed  
With glory in the horse she rode.

At half-past ten, some lads on foot  
Came to be beaters to a shoot  
Of rabbits at the Warren Hill.  
Rough sticks they had, and Hob and Jill,  
Their ferrets, in a bag, and netting.  
They talked of dinner-beer and betting ;  
And jeered at those who stood around.  
They rolled their dogs upon the ground

And teased them : "Rats" ; they cried, "go  
fetch."

"Go seek, good Roxer ; 'z bite, good betch.  
What dinner-beer'll they give us, lad ?  
Sex quarts the lot last year we had.  
They'd ought to give us seven this.  
Seek, Susan ; what a betch it is."

A pommle cob came trotting up  
Round-bellied like a drinking-cup  
Bearing on back a pommle man  
Round-bellied like a drinking-can.  
The clergyman from Condicote.  
His face was scarlet from his trot,  
His white hair bobbed about his head  
As halos do round clergy dead.  
He asked Tom Copp, "How long to wait?"  
His loose mouth opened like a gate,  
To pass the wagons of his speech,  
He had a mighty voice to preach

Though indolent in other matters  
He let his children go in tatters.

His daughter Madge on foot, flush-cheekt,  
In broken hat and boots that leakt,  
With bits of hay all over her,  
Her plain face grinning at the stir  
(A broad pale face, snub-nosed, with  
speckles

Of sandy eyebrows sprinkt with freckles)  
Came after him and stood apart  
Beside the darling of her heart,  
Miss Hattie Dyce from Baydon Dean ;  
A big young fair one, chiselled clean,  
Brow, chin and nose, with great blue eyes,  
All innocence and sweet surprise,  
And golden hair piled coil on coil  
Too beautiful for time to spoil.  
They talked in undertones together  
Not of the hunting, nor the weather.

Old Steven from Scratch Steven Place,  
(A white beard and a rosy face),  
Came next on his stringhalt grey,  
"I've come to see the hounds away,"  
He said, "And ride a field or two.  
We old have better things to do  
Than breaking all our necks for fun."  
He shone on people like the sun,  
And on himself for shining so.

Three men came riding in a row : —  
John Pym, a bull-man, quick to strike,  
Gross and blunt-headed like a shrike  
Yet sweet-voiced as a piping flute ;  
Tom See, the trainer, from the Toot,  
Red, with an angry, puzzled face  
And mouth twitched upward out of place,  
Sucking cheap grapes and spitting seeds ;  
And Stone, of Bartle's Cattle Feeds,  
A man whose bulk of flesh and bone

Made people call him Twenty Stone.

He was the man who stood a pull

At Tencombe with the Jersey bull

And brought the bull back to his stall.

Some children ranged the tavern-wall.

Sucking their thumbs and staring hard ;

Some grooms brought horses from the yard.

Jane Selbie said to Ellen Tranter,

“A lot on ’em come doggin’, ant her?”

“A lot on ’em,” said Ellen, “look

There’m Mr. Gaunt of Water’s Hook.

They say he” . . . (whispered). “Law,”  
said Jane.

Gaunt flung his heel across the mane,

And slithered from his horse and stamped.

“Boots tight,” he said, “my feet are  
cramped.”

A loose-shod horse came clicking clack ;

Nick Wolvesey on a hired hack

Come tittup, like a cup and ball.  
One saw the sun, moon, stars and all  
The great green earth twixt him and saddle ;  
Then Molly Wolvesey riding straddle  
Red as a rose, with eyes like sparks,  
Two boys from college out for larks  
Hunted bright Molly for a smile  
But were not worth their quarry's while.

Two eyeglassed gunners dressed in tweed  
Came with a spaniel on a lead  
And waited for a fellow gunner.  
The parson's son, the famous runner,  
Came dressed to follow hounds on foot.  
His knees were red as yew tree root  
From being bare, day in day out ;  
He wore a blazer, and a clout  
(His sweater's arms) tied round his neck.  
His football shorts had many a speck  
And splash of mud from many a fall



Got as he picked the slippery ball  
Heeled out behind a breaking scrum.  
He grinned at people, but was dumb,  
Not like these lousy foreigners.  
The otter-hounds and harriers  
From Godstow to the Wye all knew him.

And with him came the stock which grew him  
The parson and his sporting wife,  
She was a stout one, full of life  
With red, quick, kindly, manly face.  
She held the knave, queen, king and ace,  
In every hand she played with men.  
She was no sister to the hen,  
But fierce and minded to be queen.  
She wore a coat and skirt of green,  
A waistcoat cut of hunting red,  
Her tie pin was a fox's head.

The parson was a manly one  
His jolly eyes were bright with fun.

His jolly mouth was well inclined  
To cry aloud his jolly mind  
To everyone, in jolly terms.  
He did not talk of churchyard worms,  
But of our privilege as dust  
To box a lively bout with lust  
Ere going to Heaven to rejoice.  
He loved the sound of his own voice.  
His talk was like a charge of horse ;  
His build was all compact, for force,  
Well-knit, well-made, well-coloured, eager,  
He kept no Lent to make him meagre.  
He loved his God, himself and man.  
He never said "Life's wretched span ;  
This wicked world," in any sermon.  
This body that we feed the worm on,  
To him, was jovial stuff that thrilled.  
He liked to see the foxes killed ;  
But most he felt himself in clover  
To hear "Hen left, hare right, cock over,"

At woodside, when the leaves are brown.  
Some grey cathedral in a town  
Where drowsy bells toll out the time  
To shaven closes sweet with lime,  
And wall-flower roots drive out of the mortar  
All summer on the Norman Dortar,  
Was certain some day to be his.  
Nor would a mitre go amiss  
To him, because he governed well.  
His voice was like the tenor bell  
When services were said and sung.  
And he had read in many a tongue,  
Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Greek.

Two bright young women, nothing meek,  
Rode up on bicycles and propped  
Their wheels in such wise that they dropped  
To bring the parson's son to aid.  
Their cycling suits were tailor-made,  
Smart, mannish, pert, but feminine.

The colour and the zest of wine  
Were in their presence and their bearing ;  
Like spring, they brought the thought of  
pairing.

The parson's lady thought them pert.  
And they could mock a man and flirt,  
Do billiard tricks with corks and pennies,  
Sing ragtime songs and win at tennis  
The silver-cigarette-case-prize.  
They had good colour and bright eyes,  
Bright hair, bright teeth and pretty skin,  
Which many lads had longed to win  
On darkened stairways after dances.  
Their reading was the last romances,  
And they were dashing hockey players  
Men called them, "Jill and Joan, the slayers."  
They were as bright as fresh sweet-peas.  
Old Farmer Bennett followed these  
Upon his big-boned savage black  
Whose mule-teeth yellowed to bite back

Whatever came within his reach.  
Old Bennett sat him like a leech  
The grim old rider seemed to be  
As hard about the mouth as he.

The beaters nudged each other's ribs  
With "There he goes, his bloody Nibs.  
He come on Joe and Anty Cop,  
And beat 'em with his hunting crop  
Like tho' they'd bin a sack of beans.  
His pickers were a pack of queans,  
And Joe and Anty took a couple  
He caught 'em there, and banged 'em supple.  
Women and men, he didn't care  
(He'd kill 'em some day, if he dare)  
He beat the whole four nearly dead.  
'I'll learn 'ee rabbit in my shed,  
That's how my ricks get set afire.'  
That's what he said, the bloody liar;  
Old oaf, I'd like to burn his ricks,

Th' old swine's too free with fists and sticks.  
He keeps that Mrs. Jones himself."

Just like an axehead on its helve  
Old Bennett sat and watched the gathering.  
He'd given many a man a lathering  
In field or barn, and women, too.  
His cold eye reached the women through  
With comment, and the men with scorn.  
He hated women gently born ;  
He hated all beyond his grasp ;  
For he was minded like the asp  
That strikes whatever is not dust.

Charles Copse, of Copse Hold Manor,  
thrust

Next into view. In face and limb  
The beauty and the grace of him  
Were like the golden age returned.  
His grave eyes steadily discerned  
The good in men and what was wise.

He had deep blue, mild-coloured eyes,  
And shocks of harvest-coloured hair,  
Still beautiful with youth. An air  
Or power of kindness went about him ;  
No heart of youth could ever doubt him  
Or fail to follow where he led.  
He was a genius, simply bred,  
And quite unconscious of his power.  
He was the very red rose flower  
Of all that coloured countryside.  
Gauchos had taught him how to ride.  
He knew all arts, but practised most  
The art of bettering flesh and ghost  
In men and lads down in the mud.  
He knew no class in flesh and blood.  
He loved his kind. He spent some pith  
Long since, relieving Ladysmith.  
Many a horse he trotted tame,  
Heading commandos from their aim,  
In those old days upon the veldt.

An old bear in a scarlet pelt  
Came next, old Squire Harridew,  
His eyebrows gave a man the grue  
So bushy and so fierce they were ;  
He had a bitter tongue to swear.  
A fierce, hot, hard, old, stupid squire,  
With all his liver made of fire,  
Small brain, great courage, mulish will.  
The hearts in all his house stood still  
When someone crossed the squire's  
path.

For he was terrible in wrath,  
And smashed whatever came to hand.  
Two things he failed to understand,  
The foreigner and what was new.

His daughters, Carrie, Jane and Lu  
Rode with him, Carrie at his side.  
His son, the ne'er-do-weel, had died  
In Arizona, long before.



The Squire set the greatest store  
By Carrie, youngest of the three,  
And lovely to the blood was she ;  
Blonde, with a face of blush and cream,  
And eyes deep violet in their gleam,  
Bright blue when quiet in repose.  
She was a very golden rose.  
And many a man when sunset came  
Would see the manor windows flame,  
And think, "My beauty's home is there."  
Queen Helen had less golden hair,  
Queen Cleopatra paler lips,  
Queen Blanche's eyes were in eclipse,  
By golden Carrie's glancing by.  
She had a wit for mockery  
And sang mild, pretty senseless songs  
Of sunsets, Heav'n and lover's wrongs,  
Sweet to the Squire when he had dined.  
A rosebud need not have a mind.  
A lily is not sweet from learning.

Jane looked like a dark lantern, burning.  
Outwardly dark, unkempt, uncouth,  
But minded like the living truth,  
A friend that nothing shook nor wearied.  
She was not "Darling Jane'd," nor "dearie'd,"  
She was all prickles to the touch,  
So sharp, that many feared to clutch,  
So keen, that many thought her bitter.  
She let the little sparrows twitter.  
She had a hard ungracious way.  
Her storm of hair was iron-grey,  
And she was passionate in her heart  
For women's souls that burn apart,  
Just as her mother's had, with Squire.  
She gave the sense of smouldering fire.  
She was not happy being a maid,  
At home, with Squire, but she stayed  
Enduring life, however bleak,  
To guard her sisters who were weak,  
And force a life for them from Squire.

And she had roused and stood his fire  
A hundred times, and earned his hate,  
To win those two a better state.

Long years before the Canon's son  
Had cared for her, but he had gone  
To Klondyke, to the mines, for gold,  
To find, in some strange way untold  
A foreign grave that no men knew.

No depth, nor beauty, was in Lu,  
But charm and fun, for she was merry,  
Round, sweet and little like a cherry,  
With laughter like a robin's singing ;  
She was not kittenlike and clinging,  
But pert and arch and fond of flirting,  
In mocking ways that were not hurting,  
And merry ways that women pardoned.  
Not being married yet she gardened.  
She loved sweet music ; she would sing  
Songs made before the German King

Made England German in her mind.  
She sang "My lady is unkind,"  
"The Hunt is up," and those sweet things  
Which Thomas Campion set to strings  
"Thrice toss," and "What," and "Where  
are now?"

The next to come was Major Howe  
Driv'n in a dog-cart by a groom.  
The testy major was in fume  
To find no hunter standing waiting;  
The groom who drove him caught a rating,  
The groom who had the horse in stable,  
Was damned in half the tongues of Babel.  
The Major being hot and heady  
When horse or dinner was not ready.  
He was a lean, tough, liverish fellow,  
With pale blue eyes (the whites pale yellow),  
Moustache clipped toothbrush-wise, and jaws  
Shaved bluish like old partridge claws.

When he had stripped his coat he made  
A speckless presence for parade,  
New pink, white cords, and glossy tops  
New gloves, the newest thing in crops,  
Worn with an air that well expressed  
His sense that no one else was dressed.

Quick trotting after Major Howe  
Came Doctor Frome of Quickemshow,  
A smiling silent man whose brain  
Knew all of every secret pain  
In every man and woman there.  
Their inmost lives were all laid bare  
To him, because he touched their lives  
When strong emotions sharp as knives  
Brought out what sort of soul each was.  
As secret as the graveyard grass  
He was, as he had need to be.  
At some time he had had to see  
Each person there, sans clothes, sans mask,

Sans lying even, when to ask  
Probed a tamed spirit into truth.

Richard, his son, a jolly youth  
Rode with him, fresh from Thomas's,  
As merry as a yearling is  
In maytime in a clover patch.  
He was a gallant chick to hatch  
Big, brown and smiling, blithe and kind,  
With all his father's love of mind  
And greater force to give it act.  
To see him when the scrum was packt,  
Heave, playing forward, was a sight.  
His tackling was the crowd's delight  
In many a danger close to goal.  
The pride in the three quarter's soul  
Dropped, like a wet rag, when he collared.  
He was as steady as a bollard,  
And gallant as a skysail yard.  
He rode a chestnut mare which sparred.

In good St. Thomas' Hospital,  
He was the crown imperial  
Of all the scholars of his year.

The Harold lads, from Tencombe Weir,  
Came all on foot in corduroys,  
Poor widowed Mrs. Harold's boys,  
Dick, Hal and Charles, whose father died.  
(Will Masemore shot him in the side  
By accident at Masemore Farm  
A hazel knocked Will Masemore's arm  
In getting through a hedge; his gun  
Was not half-cocked, so it was done  
And those three boys left fatherless.)  
Their gaitered legs were in a mess  
With good red mud from twenty ditches  
Hal's face was plastered like his breeches  
Dick chewed a twig of juniper.  
They kept at distance from the stir  
Their loss had made them lads apart.

Next came the Colway's pony cart  
From Coln St. Evelyn's with the party  
Hugh Colway jovial, bold and hearty  
And Polly Colway's brother, John  
(Their horses had been both sent on)  
And Polly Colway drove them there.  
Poor pretty Polly Colway's hair.  
The grey mare killed her at the brook  
Down Seven Springs Mead at Water Hook,  
Just one month later, poor sweet woman.  
Her brother was a rat-faced Roman  
Lean, puckered, tight-skinned from the  
sea

Commander in the *Canace*  
Able to drive a horse, or ship,  
Or crew of men, without a whip  
By will, as long as they could go.  
His face would wrinkle, row on row,  
From mouth to hair-roots when he laughed  
He looked ahead as though his craft



Were with him still, in dangerous channels.  
He and Hugh Colway tossed their flannels  
Into the pony-cart and mounted.  
Six foiled attempts the watchers counted,  
The horses being bickering things,  
That so much scarlet made like kings,  
Such sidling and such pawing and shifting.

When Hugh was up his mare went drifting  
Sidelong and feeling with her heels  
For horses' legs and poshay wheels,  
While lather creamed her neat clipt skin.  
Hugh guessed her foibles with a grin.  
He was a rich town-merchant's son,  
A wise and kind man fond of fun,  
Who loved to have a troop of friends  
At Coln St. Eves for all week-ends,  
And troops of children in for tea  
He gloried in a Christmas Tree.  
And Polly was his heart's best treasure,

And Polly was a golden pleasure  
To everyone, to see or hear.

Poor Polly's dying struck him queer,  
He was a darkened man thereafter,  
Cowed silent, he would wince at laughter  
And be so gentle it was strange  
Even to see. Life loves to change.

Now Coln St. Evelyn's hearths are cold  
The shutters up, the hunters sold,  
And green mould damps the locked front door.  
But this was still a month before,  
And Polly, golden in the chaise,  
Still smiled, and there were golden days,  
Still thirty days, for those dear lovers.

The Riddens came, from Ocle Covers,  
Bill Ridden riding Stormalong,  
(By Tempest out of Love-me-long)

A proper handful of a horse,  
That nothing but the Aintree course  
Could bring to terms, save Bill perhaps.  
All sport, from bloody war to craps,  
Came well to Bill, that big-mouthed smiler ;  
They nick-named him "the mug-beguiler",  
For Billy lived too much with horses  
In coper's yards and sharper's courses,  
To lack the sharper-coper streak.  
He did not turn the other cheek,  
When struck (as English Christians do),  
He boxed like a Whitechapel Jew,  
And many a time his knuckles bled  
Against a race-course-gipsy's head.  
For "hit him first and argue later,"  
Was truth at Billy's alma mater,  
Not love, not any bosh of love.  
His hand was like a chamois glove  
And riding was his chief delight.  
He bred the chaser Chinese-white,

From Lilybud by Mandarin.

And when his mouth tucked corners in,  
And scent was high and hounds were going,  
He went across a field like snowing  
And tackled anything that came.

His wife, Sal Ridden, was the same,  
A loud, bold, blonde abundant mare,  
With white horse teeth and stooks of hair,  
(Like polished brass) and such a manner  
It flaunted from her like a banner.  
Her father was Tom See the trainer ;  
She rode a lovely earth-disdainer  
Which she and Billy wished to sell.

Behind them rode her daughter Bell,  
A strange shy lovely girl whose face  
Was sweet with thought and proud with race,  
And bright with joy at riding there.  
She was as good as blowing air

But shy and difficult to know  
The kittens in the barley-mow,  
The setter's toothless puppies sprawling,  
The blackbird in the apple calling,  
All knew her spirit more than we  
So delicate these maidens be  
In loving lovely helpless things.

The Manor set, from Tencombe Rings,  
Came, with two friends, a set of six.  
Ed Manor with his cockerel chicks,  
Nob, Cob and Bunny as they called them,  
(God help the school or rule which galled  
them ;  
They carried head) and friends from town.

Ed Manor trained on Tencombe Down.  
He once had been a famous bat,  
He had that stroke, "the Manor-pat,"  
Which snicked the ball for three, past cover.

He once scored twenty in an over,  
But now he cricketed no more.  
He purpled in the face and swore  
At all three sons, and trained, and told  
Long tales of cricketing of old,  
When he alone had saved his side.  
Drink made it doubtful if he lied,  
Drink purpled him, he could not face  
The fences now, nor go the pace  
He brought his friends to meet ; no more.

His big son Nob, at whom he swore,  
Swore back at him, for Nob was surly,  
Tall, shifty, sullen-smiling, burly,  
Quite fearless, built with such a jaw  
That no man's rule could be his law  
Nor any woman's son his master.  
Boxing he relished. He could plaster  
All those who boxed out Tencombe way.  
A front tooth had been knocked away

Two days before, which put his mouth  
A little to the east of south.  
And put a venom in his laughter.

Cob was a lighter lad, but dafter ;  
Just past eighteen, while Nob was twenty.  
Nob had no nerves but Cob had plenty  
So Cobby went where Nobby led.  
He had no brains inside his head,  
Was fearless, just like Nob, but put  
Some clog of folly round his foot,  
Where Nob put will of force or fraud ;  
He spat aside and muttered Gawd  
When vext ; he took to whiskey kindly  
And loved and followed Nobby blindly,  
And rode as in the saddle born.

Bun looked upon the two with scorn  
He was the youngest, and was wise.  
He, too, was fair, with sullen eyes,

He too (a year before) had had  
A zest for going to the bad,  
With Cob and Nob. He knew the joys  
Of drinking with the stable-boys,  
Or smoking while he filled his skin  
With pints of Guinness dashed with gin  
And Cobby yelled a bawdy ditty,  
Or cutting Nobby for the kitty,  
And damning peoples' eyes and guts,  
Or drawing evening-church for sluts  
He knew them all and now was quit.

Sweet Polly Colway managed it.  
And Bunny changed. He dropped his drink,  
(The pleasant pit's seductive brink),  
He started working in the stable,  
And well, for he was shrewd and able.  
He left the doubtful female friends  
Picked up at Evening-Service ends,  
He gave up cards and swore no more.



Nob called him "the Reforming Whore,"  
"The Soul's Awakening," or "The Text,"  
Nob being always coarse when vext.

Ed Manor's friends were Hawke and Sladd,  
Old college friends, the last he had,  
Rare horsemen, but their nerves were shaken  
By all the whiskey they had taken.  
Hawke's hand was trembling on his rein.  
His eyes were dead-blue like a vein,  
His peaked sad face was touched with breed-  
ing,  
His querulous mind was quaint from reading,  
His piping voice still quirked with fun.  
Many a mad thing he had done,  
Riding to hounds and going to races.  
A glimmer of the gambler's graces,  
Wit, courage, devil, touched his talk.  
  
Sladd's big fat face was white as chalk,  
His mind went wandering, swift yet solemn,

Twixt winning-post and betting column,  
The weights and forms and likely colts.  
He said "This road is full of jolts.  
I shall be seasick riding here.  
O damn last night with that liqueur."

Len Stokes rode up on Peterkin ;  
He owned the Downs by Baydon Whin ;  
And grazed some thousand sheep ; the boy  
Grinned round at men with jolly joy  
At being alive and being there.  
His big round face and mop of hair  
Shone, his great teeth shone in his grin,  
The clean blood in his clear tanned skin  
Ran merry, and his great voice mocked  
His young friends present till they rocked.

Steer Harpit came from Rowell Hill,  
A small, frail man, all heart and will,  
A sailor as his voice betrayed.

He let his whip-thong droop and played  
At snicking off the grass-blades with it.  
John Hankerton, from Compton Lythitt,  
Was there with Pity Hankerton,  
And Mike, their good-for-little son,  
Back, smiling, from his seventh job.  
Joan Urch was there upon her cob.  
Tom Sparsholt on his lanky grey.  
John Restrop from Hope Goneaway.  
And Vaughan, the big black handsome devil,  
Loose-lipped with song and wine and revel  
All rosy from his morning tub.

The Godsdown tigress with her cub  
(Lady and Tommy Crowmarsh) came.  
The great eyes smouldered in the dame,  
Wit glittered, too, which few men saw.  
There was more beauty there than claw.  
Tommy in bearing, horse and dress  
Was black, fastidious, handsomeness,

Choice to his trimmed soul's fingertips.  
Heredia's sonnets on his lips.  
A line undrawn, a plate not bitten,  
A stone uncut, a phrase unwritten,  
That would be perfect, made his mind.  
A choice pull, from a rare print, signed,  
Was Tommy. He collected plate,  
(Old Sheffield) and he owned each state  
Of all the Meryon Paris etchings.  
Colonel Sir Button Budd of Fletchings  
Was there; Long Robert Thrupp was there,  
(Three yards of him men said there were),  
Long as the King of Prussia's fancy.  
He rode the longlegged Necromancy,  
A useless racehorse that could canter.  
George Childrey with his jolly banter  
Was there, Nick Childrey, too, come down  
The night before from London town,  
To hunt and have his lungs blown clean.  
The Ilsley set from Tuttocks Green

Was there (old Henry Ilsley drove),  
Carlotta Ilsley brought her love  
A flop-jowled broker from the city.  
Men pitied her, for she was pretty.

Some grooms and second horsemen mustered.

A lot of men on foot were clustered  
Round the inn-door, all busy drinking,  
One heard the kissing glasses clinking  
In passage as the tray was brought.  
Two terriers (which they had there) fought  
There on the green, a loud, wild whirl.  
Bell stopped them like a gallant girl.  
The hens behind the tavern clucked.

Then on a horse which bit and bucked  
(The half-broke four-year-old Marauder)  
Came Minton-Price of th' Afghan border  
Lean, puckered, yellowed, knotted, scarred,

Tough as a hide-rope twisted hard,  
Tense tiger-sinew knit to bone.  
Strange-wayed from having lived alone  
With Kafir, Afghan and Beloosh  
In stations frozen in the Koosh  
Where nothing but the bullet sings.  
His mind had conquered many things  
Painting, mechanics, physics, law,  
White-hot, hand-beaten things to draw  
Self-hammered from his own soul's stithy,  
His speech was blacksmith-sparked and  
pithy.

Danger had been his brother bred ;  
The stones had often been his bed  
In bickers with the border-thieves.

A chestnut mare with swerves and heaves  
Came plunging, scattering all the crowd,  
She tossed her head and laughed aloud  
And bickered sideways past the meet.

From pricking ears to mincing feet  
She was all tense with blood and quiver  
You saw her clipt hide twitch and  
shiver

Over her netted cords of veins.  
She carried Cothill, of the Sleins ;  
A tall, black, bright-eyed handsome lad.  
Great power and great grace he had.  
Men hoped the greatest things of him,  
His grace made people think him slim,  
But he was muscled like a horse  
A sculptor would have wrought his torse  
In bronze or marble for Apollo.  
He loved to hurry like a swallow  
For miles on miles of short-grassed sweet  
Blue-harebelled downs where dewy feet  
Of pure winds hurry ceaselessly.  
He loved the downland like a sea,  
The downland where the kestrels hover ;  
The downland had him for a lover.

And every other thing he loved  
In which a clean free spirit moved.

So beautiful, he was, so bright.  
He looked to men like young delight  
Gone courting April maidenhood,  
That has the primrose in her blood,  
He on his mincing lady mare.

Ock Gurney and old Pete were there,  
Riding their bonny cobs and swearing.  
Ock's wife had giv'n them both a fairing,  
A horse-rosette, red, white and blue.  
Their cheeks were brown as any brew,  
And every comer to the meet  
Said "Hello, Ock" or "Morning, Pete ;  
Be you a going to a wedding?"  
"Why, noa," they said, "we'm going a bed-  
ding ;  
Now ben't us, uncle, ben't us, Ock?"



Pete Gurney was a lusty cock  
Turned sixty-three, but bright and hale,  
A dairy-farmer in the vale,  
Much like a robin in the face,  
Much character in little space,  
With little eyes like burning coal.  
His mouth was like a slit or hole  
In leather that was seamed and lined.  
He had the russet-apple mind  
That betters as the weather worsen.  
He was a manly English person,  
Kind to the core, brave, merry, true ;  
One grief he had, a grief still new,  
That former Parson joined with Squire  
In putting down the Playing Quire,  
In church, and putting organ in.  
“Ah, boys, that was a pious din  
That Quire was ; a pious praise  
The noise was that we used to raise ;  
I and my serpent, George with his’n,

On Easter Day in He is Risen,  
Or blessed Christmas in Venite;  
And how the trombone came in mighty,  
In Alleluias from the heart.  
Pious, for each man played his part,  
Not like 'tis now." Thus he, still sore  
For changes forty years before,  
When all (that could) in time and tune,  
Blew trumpets to the newē moon.  
He was a bachelor, from choice.  
He and his nephew farmed the Boyce  
Prime pasture land for thirty cows.  
Ock's wife, Selina Jane, kept house,  
And jolly were the three together.

Ock had a face like summer weather  
A broad red sun, split by a smile.  
He mopped his forehead all the while,  
And said "By damn," and "Ben't us,  
Unk?"

■

His eyes were close and deeply sunk.  
He cursed his hunter like a lover,  
“Now blast your soul, my dear, give over.  
Woa, now, my pretty, damn your eyes.”  
Like Pete he was of middle size,  
Dean-oak-like, stuggy, strong in shoulder,  
He stood a wrestle like a boulder,  
He had a back for pitching hay.  
His singing voice was like a bay.  
In talk he had a sideways spit,  
Each minute, to refresh his wit.  
He cracked Brazil nuts with his teeth.  
He challenged Cobbett of the Heath  
(Weight-lifting champion) once, but lost.  
Hunting was what he loved the most,  
Next to his wife and Uncle Pete.  
With beer to drink and cheese to eat,  
And rain in May to fill the grasses,  
This life was not a dream that passes  
To Ock, but like the summer flower.

But now the clock had struck the hour,  
And round the corner, down the road  
The bob-bob-bobbing serpent flowed  
With three black knobs upon its spine ;  
Three bobbing black-caps in a line.  
A glimpse of scarlet at the gap  
Showed underneath each bobbing cap,  
And at the corner by the gate,  
One heard Tom Dansey give a rate,  
“Hep, Drop it, Jumper ; have a care”  
There came a growl, half-rate, half-swear,  
A spitting crack, a tuneful whimper  
And sweet religion entered Jumper.

There was a general turn of faces,  
The men and horses shifted places,  
And round the corner came the hunt,  
Those feathery things, the hounds, in front,  
Intent, wise, dipping, trotting, straying,  
Smiling at people, shoving, playing,

Nosing to children's faces, waving  
Their feathery sterns, and all behaving,  
One eye to Dansey on Maroon.  
Their padding cat-feet beat a tune,  
And though they trotted up so quiet  
Their noses brought them news of riot,  
Wild smells of things with living blood,  
Hot smells, against the grippers good,  
Of weasel, rabbit, cat and hare,  
Whose feet had been before them there,  
Whose taint still tingled every breath ;  
But Dansey on Maroon was death,  
So, though their noses roved, their feet  
Larked and trit-trotted to the meet.

Bill Tall and Ell and Mirtie Key  
(Aged fourteen years between the three)  
Were flooded by them at the bend,  
They thought their little lives would end,  
For grave sweet eyes looked into theirs,

Cold noses came, and clean short hairs  
And tails all crumpled up like ferns,  
A sea of moving heads and sterns,  
All round them, brushing coat and dress ;  
One paused, expecting a caress.  
The children shrank into each other,  
Shut eyes, clutched tight, and shouted  
"Mother"

With mouths wide open, catching tears.

Sharp Mrs. Tall allayed their fears,  
"Err out the road, the dogs won't hurt 'ee.  
There now, you've cried your faces dirty.  
More cleaning up for me to do.  
What? Cry at dogs, great lumps like you?"  
She licked her handkerchief and smeared  
Their faces where the dirt appeared.

The hunt trit-trotted to the meeting,  
Tom Dansey touching cap to greeting,

Slow-lifting crop-thong to the rim,  
No hunter there got more from him  
Except some brightening of the eye.  
He halted at the Cock and Pye,  
The hounds drew round him on the green,  
Arrogant, Daffodil and Queen,  
Closest, but all in little space.  
Some lolled their tongues, some made grimace,  
Yawning, or tilting nose in quest,  
All stood and looked about with zest,  
They were uneasy as they waited.  
Their sires and dams had been well-mated,  
They were a lovely pack for looks ;  
Their forelegs drumsticked without crooks,  
Straight, without overtread or bend,  
Muscled to gallop to the end,  
With neat feet round as any cat's.  
Great chested, muscled in the slats,  
Bright, clean, short-coated, broad in shoulder

With stag-like eyes that seemed to smoulder.  
The heads well-cocked, the clean necks  
strong ;  
Brows broad, ears close, the muzzles  
long ;  
And all like racers in the thighs ;  
Their noses exquisitely wise,  
Their minds being memories of smells ;  
Their voices like a ring of bells ;  
Their sterns all spirit, cock and feather ;  
Their colours like the English weather,  
Magpie and hare, and badger-pye,  
Like minglings in a double dye,  
Some smutty-nosed, some tan, none bald ;  
Their manners were to come when called,  
Their flesh was sinew knit to bone,  
Their courage like a banner blown.  
Their joy, to push him out of cover,  
And hunt him till they rolled him over.  
They were as game as Robert Dover.



Tom Dansey was a famous whip  
Trained as a child in horsemanship  
Entered, as soon as he was able  
As boy at Caunter's racing stable ;  
There, like the other boys, he slept  
In stall beside the horse he kept,  
Snug in the straw ; and Caunter's stick  
Brought morning to him all too quick.  
He learned the high quick gingery ways  
Of thoroughbreds ; his stable days  
Made him a rider, groom and vet.  
He promised to be too thickset  
For jockeying, so left it soon.  
Now he was whip and rode Maroon.

He was a small, lean, wiry man  
With sunk cheeks weathered to a tan  
Scarred by the spikes of hawthorn sprays  
Dashed thro', head down, on going days,  
In haste to see the line they took.

There was a beauty in his look  
It was intent. His speech was plain.  
Maroon's head, reaching to the rein,  
Had half his thought before he spoke.  
His "gone away," when foxes broke,  
Was like a bell. His chief delight  
Was hunting fox from noon to night.  
His pleasure lay in hounds and horses,  
He loved the Seven Springs water-courses,  
Those flashing brooks (in good sound grass,  
Where scent would hang like breath on glass).  
He loved the English countryside;  
The wine-leaved bramble in the ride,  
The lichen on the apple-trees,  
The poultry ranging on the lees,  
The farms, the moist earth-smelling cover,  
His wife's green grave at Mitcheldover,  
Where snowdrops pushed at the first thaw.  
Under his hide his heart was raw  
With joy and pity of these things.

The second whip was Kitty Myngs  
Still but a lad but keen and quick  
(Son of old Myngs who farmed the Wick)  
A horse-mouthed lad who knew his work.  
He rode the big black horse, the Turk,  
And longed to be a huntsman bold.  
He had the horse-look, sharp and old,  
With much good-nature in his face.  
His passion was to go the pace  
His blood was crying for a taming.  
He was the Devil's chick for gaming,  
He was a rare good lad to box.  
He sometimes had a main of cocks  
Down at the Flags. His job with hounds  
At present kept his blood in bounds  
From rioting and running hare.  
Tom Dansey made him have a care  
He worshipped Dansey heart and soul.  
To be a huntsman was his goal  
To be with hounds, to charge full tilt

Blackthorns that made the gentry wilt  
Was his ambition and his hope.  
He was a hot colt needing rope  
He was too quick to speak his passion  
To suit his present huntsman's fashion.

The huntsman, Robin Dawe, looked round,  
He sometimes called a favourite hound,  
Gently, to see the creature turn  
Look happy up and wag his stern.  
He smiled and nodded and saluted,  
To those who hailed him, as it suited.  
And patted Pip's, his hunter's neck.  
His new pink was without a speck ;  
He was a red-faced smiling fellow,  
His voice clear tenor, full and mellow,  
His eyes, all fire, were black and small.  
He had been smashed in many a fall.  
His eyebrow had a white curved mark  
Left by the bright shoe of The Lark,

Down in a ditch by Seven Springs.  
His coat had all been trod to strings,  
His ribs laid bare and shoulder broken  
Being jumped on down at Water's Oaken,  
The time his horse came down and rolled.  
His face was of the country mould  
Such as the mason sometimes cutted  
On English moulding-ends which juttet  
Out of the church walls, centuries since.  
And as you never know the quince,  
How good he is, until you try,  
So, in Dawe's face, what met the eye  
Was only part, what lay behind  
Was English character and mind.  
Great kindness, delicate sweet feeling,  
(Most shy, most clever in concealing  
Its depth) for beauty of all sorts,  
Great manliness and love of sports,  
A grave wise thoughtfulness and truth,  
A merry fun, outlasting youth,

A courage terrible to see  
And mercy for his enemy.

He had a clean-shaved face, but kept  
A hedge of whisker neatly clipt,  
A narrow strip or picture frame  
(Old Dawe, the woodman, did the same),  
Under his chin from ear to ear.

But now the resting hounds gave cheer,  
Joyful and Arrogant and Catch-him,  
Smelt the glad news and ran to snatch him,  
The Master's dogcart turned the bend.  
Damsel and Skylark knew their friend ;  
A thrill ran through the pack like fire,  
And little whimpers ran in quire.  
The horses cocked and pawed and whickered,  
Young Cothill's chaser kicked and bickered,  
And stood on end and struck out sparks.  
Joyful and Catch-him sang like larks,

There was the Master in the trap,  
Clutching old Roman in his lap,  
Old Roman, crazy for his brothers,  
And putting frenzy in the others,  
To set them at the dogcart wheels,  
With thrusting heads and little squeals.

The Master put old Roman by,  
And eyed the thrusters heedfully,  
He called a few pet hounds and fed  
Three special friends with scraps of bread,  
Then peeled his wraps, climbed down and  
strode

Through all those clamourers in the road,  
Saluted friends, looked round the crowd,  
Saw Harridew's three girls and bowed,  
Then took White Rabbit from the groom.

He was Sir Peter Bynd, of Coombe ;  
Past sixty now, though hearty still,

A living picture of good-will,  
An old, grave soldier, sweet and kind,  
A courtier with a knightly mind,  
Who felt whatever thing he thought.  
His face was scarred, for he had fought  
Five wars for us. Within his face  
Courage and power had their place,  
Rough energy, decision, force.  
He smiled about him from his horse.  
He had a welcome and salute  
For all, on horse or wheel or foot,  
Whatever kind of life each followed.  
His tanned, drawn cheeks looked old and  
    hollowed,  
But still his bright blue eyes were young,  
And when the pack crashed into tongue,  
And staunch White Rabbit shook like fire,  
He sent him at it like a flier,  
And lived with hounds while horses  
    could.



“They’m lying in the Ghost Heath Wood,  
Sir Peter,” said an earth-stopper,  
(Old Baldy Hill), “You’ll find ’em there.  
’Z I come’d across I smell ’em plain.  
There’s one up back, down Tuttock’s  
drain,  
But, Lord, it’s just a bog, the Tuttocks,  
Hounds would be swallowed to the buttocks.  
Heath Wood, Sir Peter’s best to draw.”

Sir Peter gave two minutes’ law  
For Kingston Challow and his daughter;  
He said. “They’re late. We’ll start the  
slaughter.  
Ghost Heath, then, Dansey. We’ll be go-  
ing.”

Now, at his word, the tide was flowing  
Off went Maroon, off went the hounds,  
Down road, then off, to Chols Elm Grounds,

Across soft turf with dead leaves cleaving  
And hillocks that the mole was heaving,  
Mild going to those trotting feet.

After the scarlet coats, the meet  
Came clopping up the grass in spate ;  
They poached the trickle at the gate ;  
Their horses' feet sucked at the mud ;  
Excitement in the horses' blood,  
Cocked forward every ear and eye ;  
They quivered as the hounds went by,  
They trembled when they first trod grass ;  
They would not let another pass  
They scattered wide up Chols Elm Hill.

The wind was westerly but still ;  
The sky a high fair-weather cloud,  
Like meadows ridge-and-furrow ploughed,  
Just glinting sun but scarcely moving.  
Blackbirds and thrushes thought of loving,  
Catkins were out ; the day seemed tense

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It was so still. At every fence  
Cow-parsley pushed its thin green fern.  
White-violet-leaves shewed at the burn.

Young Cothill let his chaser go  
Round Chols Elm Field a turn or so  
To soothe his edge. The riders went  
Chatting and laughing and content  
In groups of two or three together. .  
The hounds, a flock of shaking feather,  
Bobbed on ahead, past Chols Elm Cop.  
The horses' shoes went clip-a-clop,  
Along the stony cart-track there.  
The little spinney was all bare,  
But in the earth-moist winter day  
The scarlet coats twixt tree and spray,  
The glistening horses pressing on,  
The brown faced lads, Bill, Dick and John,  
And all the hurry to arrive,  
Were beautiful like spring alive.

The hounds melted away with Master  
The tanned lads ran, the field rode faster,  
The chatter joggled in the throats  
Of riders bumping by like boats,  
“We really ought to hunt a bye day.”  
“Fine day for scent,” “A fly or die day.”  
“They chopped a bagman in the check,  
He had a collar round his neck.”  
“Old Ridden’s girl’s a pretty flapper.”  
“That Vaughan’s a cad, the whipper-  
snapper.”  
“I tell ’ee, lads, I seed ’em plain,  
Down in the Rough at Shifford’s Main,  
Old Squire stamping like a Duke,  
So red with blood I thought he’d puke,  
In appleplexie, as they do.  
Miss Jane stood just as white as dew,  
And heard him out in just white heat,  
And then she trimmed him down a  
treat,

About Miss Lou it was, or Carrie  
(She'd be a pretty peach to marry)."

"Her'll draw up-wind, so us'll go  
Down by the furze, we'll see 'em so."

"Look, there they go, lad."

There they went,  
Across the brook and up the bent,  
Past Primrose Wood, past Brady Ride,  
Along Ghost Heath to cover side.  
The bobbing scarlet, trotting pack,  
Turf scatters tossed behind each back,  
Some horses blowing with a whinny,  
A jam of horses in the spinney,  
Close to the ride-gate; leather straining,  
Saddles all creaking; men complaining,  
Chaffing each other as they pass't,  
On Ghost Heath turf they trotted fast.

Now as they neared the Ghost Heath Wood,  
Some riders grumbled, "What's the good :  
It's shot all day and poached all night.  
We shall draw blank and lose the light,  
And lose the scent, and lose the day.  
Why can't he draw Hope Goneaway,  
Or Tuttocks Wood, instead of this?  
There's no fox here, there never is."

But as he trotted up to cover,  
Robin was watching to discover  
What chance there was, and many a token  
Told him, that though no hound had  
spoken,  
Most of them stirred to something there.  
The old hounds' muzzles searched the air,  
Thin ghosts of scents were in their teeth,  
From foxes which had crossed the Heath  
Not very many hours before.  
"We'll find," he said, "I'll bet a score."

Along Ghost Heath they trotted well,  
The hoof-cuts made the bruised earth smell,  
The shaken brambles scattered drops,  
Stray pheasants kukkered out of copse,  
Cracking the twigs down with their knockings  
And planing out of sight with cockings;  
A scut or two lopped white to bramble.

And now they gathered to the gamble  
At Ghost Heath Wood on Ghost Heath Down,  
The hounds went crackling through the brown  
Dry stalks of bracken killed by frost.  
The wood stood silent in its host  
Of halted trees all winter bare.  
The boughs, like veins that suck the air,  
Stretched tense, the last leaf scarcely  
stirred.

There came no song from any bird;  
The darkness of the wood stood still  
Waiting for fate on Ghost Heath Hill.

The whips crept to the sides to view ;  
The Master gave the nod, and "Leu,  
Leu in, Ed-hoick, Ed-hoick, Leu in,"  
Went Robin, cracking through the whin  
And through the hedge-gap into cover.  
The binders crashed as hounds went over,  
And cock-cock-cock the pheasants rose.  
Then up went stern and down went nose,  
And Robin's cheerful tenor cried,  
Through hazel-scrub and stub and ride,  
"O wind him beauties, push him out,  
Yooi, onto him, Yahout, Yahout,  
O push him out, Yooi, wind him, wind him."  
The beauties burst the scrub to find him,  
They nosed the warren's clipped green lawn,  
The bramble and the broom were drawn,  
The covert's northern end was blank.

They turned to draw along the bank  
Through thicker cover than the Rough



Through three-and-four-year understuff  
Where Robin's forearm screened his eyes.  
"Yooi, find him, beauties," came his cries.  
"Hark, hark to Daffodil," the laughter  
Faln from his horn, brought whimpers after,  
For ends of scents were everywhere.  
He said, "This Hope's a likely lair.  
And there's his billets, grey and furred.  
And George, he's moving, there's a bird."

A blue uneasy jay was chacking.  
(A swearing screech, like tearing sacking)  
From tree to tree, as in pursuit,  
He said "That's it. There's fox afoot.  
And there, they're feathering, there she  
speaks.  
Good Daffodil, good Tarrybreeks,  
Hark there, to Daffodil, hark, hark."  
The mild horn's note, the soft flaked spark  
Of music, fell on that rank scent.

From heart to wild heart magic went.  
The whimpering quivered, quavered, rose.  
“Daffodil has it. There she goes.  
O hark to her.” With wild high crying  
From frantic hearts, the hounds went flying  
To Daffodil for that rank taint.  
A waft of it came warm but faint,  
In Robin’s mouth, and faded so.  
“First find a fox, then let him go,”  
Cried Robin Dawe. “For any sake.  
Ring, Charley, till you’re fit to break.”  
He cheered his beauties like a lover  
And charged beside them into cover.



## **PART II**



On old Cold Crendon's windy tops  
Grows wintrily Blown Hilcote Copse,  
Wind-bitten beech with badger barrows,  
Where brocks eat wasp-grubs with their  
    marrows,  
And foxes lie on short-grassed turf,  
Nose between paws, to hear the surf  
Of wind in the beeches drowsily.  
There was our fox bred lustily  
Three years before, and there he berthed  
Under the beech-roots snugly earthed,  
With a roof of flint and a floor of chalk  
And ten bitten hens' heads each on its stalk,  
Some rabbits' paws, some fur from scuts,  
A badger's corpse and a smell of guts.  
And there on the night before my tale  
He trotted out for a point in the vale.

He saw, from the cover edge, the valley  
Go trooping down with its droops of sally  
To the brimming river's lipping bend,  
And a light in the inn at Water's End.  
He heard the owl go hunting by  
And the shriek of the mouse the owl made die,  
And the purr of the owl as he tore the red  
Strings from between his claws and fed ;  
The smack of joy of the horny lips  
Marbled green with the blobby strips.  
He saw the farms where the dogs were bark-  
ing,  
Cold Crendon Court and Copsecote Larking ;  
The fault with the spring as bright as gleed,  
Green-slash-laced with water weed.  
A glare in the sky still marked the town,  
Though all folk slept and the blinds were  
down,  
The street lamps watched the empty square,  
The night-cat sang his evil there. -

The fox's nose tipped up and round  
Since smell is a part of sight and sound.  
Delicate smells were drifting by,  
The sharp nose flaired them heedfully ;  
Partridges in the clover stubble,  
Crouched in a ring for the stoat to nubble.  
Rabbit bucks beginning to box ;

A scratching place for the pheasant cocks ;  
A hare in the dead grass near the drain,  
And another smell like the spring again.

A faint rank taint like April coming,  
It cocked his ears and his blood went drum-  
ming,

For somewhere out by Ghost Heath Stubs  
Was a roving vixen wanting cubs.  
Over the valley, floating faint  
On a warmth of windflaw came the taint,  
He cocked his ears, he upped his brush,  
And he went up wind like an April thrush.



By the Roman Road to Braiches Ridge  
Where the fallen willow makes a bridge,  
Over the brook by White Hart's Thorn,  
To the acres thin with pricking corn.  
Over the sparse green hair of the wheat,  
By the Clench Brook Mill at Clench Brook  
Leat,  
Through Cowfoot Pastures to Nonely  
Stevens,  
And away to Poltrewood St. Jevons.  
Past Tott Hill Down all snaked with meuses,  
Past Clench St. Michael and Naunton Crucis,  
Past Howle's Oak Farm where the raving  
brain  
Of a dog who heard him foamed his chain,  
Then off, as the farmer's window opened,  
Past Stonepits Farm to Upton Hope End ;  
Over short sweet grass and worn flint arrows,  
And the three dumb hows of Tencombe Bar-  
rows ;

And away and away with a rolling scramble,  
Through the blackthorn and up the bramble,  
With a nose for the smells the night wind  
    carried,  
And his red fell clean for being married.  
For clicketting time and Ghost Heath Wood  
Had put the violet in his blood.

At Tencombe Rings near the Manor Linney,  
His foot made the great black stallion whinny,  
And the stallion's whinny aroused the stable  
And the bloodhound bitches stretched their  
    cable,  
And the clink of the bloodhound's chain  
    aroused  
The sweet-breathed kye as they chewed and  
    drowsed,  
And the stir of the cattle changed the dream  
Of the cat in the loft to tense green gleam.  
The red-wattled black cock hot from Spain

Crowed from his perch for dawn again,  
His breast-pufft hens, one-legged on perch,  
Gurgled, beak-down, like men in church,  
They crooned in the dark, lifting one red eye  
In the raftered roost as the fox went by.

By Tencombe Regis and Slaughters Court,  
Through the great grass square of Roman  
Fort,

By Nun's Wood Yews and the Hungry Hill,  
And the Corpse Way Stones all standing still,  
By Seven Springs Mead to Deerlip Brook,  
And a lolloping leap to Water Hook.

Then with eyes like sparks and his blood  
awoken

Over the grass to Water's Oaken,  
And over the hedge and into ride  
In Ghost Heath Wood for his roving bride.

Before the dawn he had loved and fed  
And found a kennel and gone to bed

On a shelf of grass in a thick of gorse  
That would bleed a hound and blind a horse.  
There he slept in the mild west weather  
With his nose and brush well tucked together,  
He slept like a child, who sleeps yet hears  
With the self who needs neither eyes nor  
ears.

He slept while the pheasant cock untucked  
His head from his wing, flew down and  
kukked,  
While the drove of the starlings whirred and  
wheeled  
Out of the ash-trees into field.  
While with great black flags that flogged and  
paddled  
The rooks went out to the plough and  
straddled,  
Straddled wide on the moist red cheese,  
Of the furrows driven at Uppat's Leas.

[illegible]

Cows in a byre, and distant men,  
And Condicote church-clock striking ten.

At eleven o'clock a boy went past,  
With a rough-haired terrier following fast  
The boy's sweet whistle and dog's quick yap  
Woke the fox from out of his nap.

He rose and stretched till the claws in his  
    pads,  
Stuck hornily out like long black gads,  
He listened a while, and his nose went round  
To catch the smell of the distant sound.

The windward smells came free from taint  
They were rabbit, strongly, with lime-kiln,  
    faint,  
A wild-duck, likely, at Sars Holt Pond,  
And sheep on the Sars Holt Down beyond.  
The lee-ward smells were much less certain

For the Ghost Heath Hill was like a curtain,  
Yet vague, from the lee-ward, now and then,  
Came muffled sounds like the sound of men.

He moved to his right to a clearer space,  
And all his soul came into his face,  
Into his eyes and into his nose,  
As over the hill a murmur rose.

His ears were cocked and his keen nose  
    flaired,  
He sneered with his lips till his teeth were  
    bared,  
He trotted right and lifted a pad  
Trying to test what foes he had.

On Ghost Heath turf was a steady drumming  
Which sounded like horses quickly coming,  
It died as the hunt went down the dip,  
Then Malapert yelped at Myngs's whip.

A bright iron horseshoe clinkt on stone,  
Then a man's voice spoke, not one alone,  
Then a burst of laughter, swiftly still,  
Muffled away by Ghost Heath Hill.  
Then, indistinctly, the clop, clip, clep,  
On Brady Ride, of a horse's step.  
Then silence, then, in a burst, much clearer,  
Voices and horses coming nearer,  
And another noise, of a pit-pat beat  
On the Ghost Hill grass, of foxhound feet.

He sat on his haunches listening hard,  
While his mind went over the compass  
card,  
Men were coming and rest was done,  
But he still had time to get fit to run ;  
He could outlast horse and outrace hound,  
But men were devils from Lobs's Pound.  
Scent was burning, the going good  
The world one lust for a fox's blood,



The main earths stopped and the drains  
put-to,

And fifteen miles to the land he knew.

But of all the ills, the ill least pleasant

Was to run in the light when men were present.

Men in the fields to shout and sign

For a lift of hounds to a fox's line.

Men at the earth at the long point's end,

Men at each check and none his friend,

Guessing each shift that a fox contrives,

But still, needs must when the devil drives.

He readied himself, then a soft horn blew,

Then a clear voice carolled "Ed-hoick.  
Eleu."

Then the wood-end rang with the clear voice  
crying

And the crackle of scrub where hounds were  
trying.

Then, the horn blew nearer, a hound's voice  
quivered,

Then another, then more, till his body  
shivered,

He left his kennel and trotted thence  
With his ears flexed back and his nerves all  
tense.

He trotted down with his nose intent  
For a fox's line to cross his scent,  
It was only fair (he being a stranger)  
That the native fox should have the danger.  
Danger was coming, so swift, so swift,  
That the pace of his trot began to lift  
The blue-winged Judas, a jay, began  
Swearing, hounds whimpered, air stank of  
man.

He hurried his trotting, he now felt frightened,  
It was his poor body made hounds excited

He felt as he ringed the great wood through  
That he ought to make for the land he knew.

Then the hounds' excitement quivered and  
quicken'd,

Then a horn blew death till his marrow  
sicken'd,

Then the wood behind was a crash of cry  
For the blood in his veins ; it made him fly.

They were on his line ; it was death to stay  
He must make for home by the shortest way  
But with all this yelling and all this wrath  
And all these devils, how find a path ?

He ran like a stag to the wood's north corner,  
Where the hedge was thick and the ditch a  
yawner,

But the scarlet glimpse of Myngs on Turk,  
Watching the woodside, made him shirk.

He ringed the wood and looked at the south.  
What wind there was blew into his mouth.  
But close to the woodland's blackthorn  
          thicket

Was Dansey, still as a stone, on picket.  
At Dansey's back were a twenty more  
Watching the cover and pressing fore.

The fox drew in and flaired with his muzzle.  
Death was there if he messed the puzzle.  
There were men without and hounds within,  
A crying that stiffened the hair on skin,  
Teeth in cover and death without,  
Both deaths coming, and no way out.

His nose ranged swiftly, his heart beat fast,  
Then a crashing cry rose up in a blast,  
Then horse hooves trampled, then horses'  
          flitches  
Burst their way through the hazel switches

Then the horn again made the hounds like  
mad,

And a man, quite near, said "Found, by  
Gad,"

And a man, quite near, said "Now he'll  
break.

Lark's Leybourne Copse is the line he'll take."

And the men moved up with their talk and  
stink

And the traplike noise of the horseshoe clink.

Men whose coming meant death from teeth

In a worrying wrench with him beneath.

The fox sneaked down by the cover side,

(With his ears flexed back) as a snake would

glide,

He took the ditch at the cover-end,

He hugged the ditch as his only friend.

The blackbird cock with the golden beak

Got out of his way with a jabbering shriek

And the shriek told Tom on the raking bay  
That for eighteen pence he was gone away.

He ran in the hedge in the triple growth  
Of bramble and hawthorn, glad of both,  
Till a couple of fields were past, and then  
Came the living death of the dread of men.

Then, as he listened, he heard a "Hoy,"  
Tom Dansey's horn and "Awa-wa-woy."  
Then all hounds crying with all their forces,  
Then a thundering down of seventy horses.  
Robin Dawe's horn and halloos of "Hey  
Hark Hollar, Hoik" and "Gone away,"  
"Hark Hollar Hoik," and the smack of a whip  
A yelp as a tail hound caught the clip.  
"Hark Hollar, Hark Hollar"; then Robin  
    made  
Pip go crash through the cut-and-laid,  
Hounds were over and on his line

With a head like bees upon Tipple Tine.  
The sound of the nearness sent a flood  
Of terror of death through the fox's blood.  
He upped his brush and he cocked his nose,  
And he went up wind as a racer goes.

Bold Robin Dawe was over first,  
Cheering his hounds on at the "burst ;  
The field were spurring to be in it  
"Hold hard, sirs, give them half a minute,"  
Came from Sir Peter on his white.  
The hounds went romping with delight  
Over the grass and got together ;  
The tail hounds galloped hell-for-leather  
After the pack at Myngs's yell ;  
A cry like every kind of bell  
Rang from these rompers as they raced.

The riders thrusting to be placed,  
Jammed down their hats and shook their  
horses,

The hounds romped past with all their  
forces,

They crashed into the blackthorn fence ;

The scent was heavy on their sense,

So hot it seemed the living thing,

It made the blood within them sing,

Gusts of it made their hackles rise,

Hot gulps of it were agonies

Of joy, and thirst for blood, and passion.

“Forrard,” cried Robin, “that’s the  
fashion.”

He raced beside his pack to cheer.

The field’s noise died upon his ear,

A faint horn, far behind, blew thin

In cover, lest some hound were in.

Then instantly the great grass rise

Shut field and cover from his eyes,

He and his racers were alone.

“A dead fox or a broken bone,”

Said Robin, peering for his prey.



The rise, which shut his field away,  
Shewed him the vale's great map spread  
out,

The downs' lean flank and thrusting snout,  
Pale pastures, red-brown plough, dark wood,  
Blue distance, still as solitude,  
Glitter of water here and there,  
The trees so delicately bare.

The dark green gorse and bright green holly.

"O glorious God," he said, "how jolly."

And there, down hill, two fields ahead,

The lolloping red dog-fox sped

Over Poor Pastures to the brook.

He grasped these things in one swift look

Then dived into the bulfinch heart

Through thorns that ripped his sleeves apart

And skutched new blood upon his brow.

"His point's Lark's Leybourne Covers now,"

Said Robin, landing with a grunt,

"Forrard, my beautifuls."

## The hunt

Followed down hill to race with him,  
White Rabbit with his swallow's skim,  
Drew within hail, "Quick burst, Sir Peter."  
"A traveller. Nothing could be neater.  
Making for Godsdown clumps I take it?"  
"Lark's Leybourne, sir, if he can make it.  
Forrard."

Bill Ridden thundered down ;  
His big mouth grinned beneath his frown,  
The hounds were going away from horses.  
He saw the glint of water-courses,  
Yell Brook and Wittold's Dyke ahead,  
His horse shoes sliced the green turf red.  
Young Cothill's chaser rushed and passt him,  
Nob Manor, running next, said "Blast him,  
That poet chap who thinks he rides."  
Hugh Colway's mare made straking strides  
Across the grass, the Colonel next :

Then Squire volleying oaths and vext,  
Fighting his hunter for refusing :  
Bell Ridden like a cutter cruising  
Sailing the grass, then Cob on Warder  
Then Minton Price upon Marauder ;  
Ock Gurney with his eyes intense,  
Burning as with a different sense,  
His big mouth muttering glad "by damns" ;  
Then Pete crouched down from head to hams,  
Rapt like a saint, bright focussed flame ·  
Bennett with devils in his wame  
Chewing black cud and spitting slanting ;  
Copse scattering jests and Stukely ranting ;  
Sal Ridden taking line from Dansey ;  
Long Robert forcing Necromancy ;  
A dozen more with bad beginnings ;  
Myngs riding hard to snatch an innings,  
A wild last hound with high shrill yelps,  
Smacked forrard with some whip-thong  
skelps.

Then last of all, at top of rise,  
The crowd on foot all gasps and eyes  
The run up hill had winded them.

They saw the Yell Brook like a gem  
Blue in the grass a short mile on  
They heard faint cries, but hounds were gone  
A good eight fields and out of sight  
Except a rippled glimmer white  
Going away with dying cheering  
And scarlet flappings disappearing,  
And scattering horses going, going,  
Going like mad, White Rabbit snowing  
Far on ahead, a loose horse taking,  
Fence after fence with stirrups shaking,  
And scarlet specks and dark specks dwindling.

Nearer, were twigs knocked into kindling,  
A much bashed fence still dropping stick,  
Flung clods, still quivering from the kick,

Cut hoof-marks pale in cheesy clay,  
The horse-smell blowing clean away.  
Birds flitting back into the cover.  
One last faint cry, then all was over.  
The hunt had been, and found, and gone.

At Neakings Farm, three furlongs on,  
Hounds raced across the Waysmore Road,  
Where many of the riders slowed  
To tittup down a grassy lane,  
Which led as hounds led in the main  
And gave no danger of a fall.  
There, as they tittupped one and all,  
Big Twenty Stone came scattering by,  
His great mare made the hoof-casts fly.  
"By leave," he cried. "Come on. Come up,  
This fox is running like a tup ;  
Let's leave this lane and get to terms.  
No sense in crawling here like worms.  
Come let me past and let me start,

This fox is running like a hart,  
And this is going to be a run.  
Come on. I want to see the fun.  
Thanky. By leave. Now, Maiden ; do it.”  
He faced the fence and put her through it  
Shielding his eyes lest spikes should blind  
him,  
The crashing blackthorn closed behind him.  
Mud-scatters chased him as he scudded.  
His mare's ears cocked, her neat feet thudded.

The kestrel cruising over meadow  
Watched the hunt gallop on his shadow,  
Wee figures, almost at a stand,  
Crossing the multi-coloured land,  
Slow as a shadow on a dial.

Some horses, swerving at a trial,  
Baulked at a fence : at gates they bunched.  
The mud about the gates was dunched .

Like German cheese ; men pushed for places,  
And kicked the mud into the faces  
Of those who made them room to pass.  
The half-mile's gallop on the grass,  
Had tailed them out, and warmed their  
blood.

"His point's the Banner Barton Wood."

"That, or Goat's Gorse." "A stinger,  
this."

"You're right in that ; by Jove it is."

"An up-wind travelling fox, by George."

"They say Tom viewed him at the forge."

"Well, let me pass and let's be on."

They crossed the lane to Tolderton,  
The hill-marl died to valley clay,  
And there before them ran the grey  
Yell Water, swirling as it ran,  
The Yell Brook of the hunting man.  
The hunters eyed it and were grim.

They saw the water snaking slim  
Ahead, like silver ; they could see  
(Each man) his pollard willow tree  
Firming the bank, they felt their horses  
Catch the gleam's hint and gather forces ;  
They heard the men behind draw near.  
Each horse was trembling as a spear  
Trembles in hand when tense to hurl,  
They saw the brimmed brook's eddies curl.  
The willow-roots like water-snakes ;  
The beaten holes the ratten makes,  
They heard the water's rush ; they heard  
Hugh Colway's mare come like a bird ;  
A faint cry from the hounds ahead,  
Then saddle-strain, the bright hooves' tread,  
Quick words, the splash of mud, the launch,  
The sick hope that the bank be staunch,  
Then Souse, with Souse to left and right.  
Maroon across, Sir Peter's white  
Down but pulled up, Tom over, Hugh



Mud to the hat but over, too,  
Well splashed by Squire who was in.

With draggled pink stuck close to skin,  
The Squire leaned from bank and hauled  
His mired horse's rein; he bawled  
For help from each man racing by.  
"What, help you pull him out? Not I.  
What made you pull him in?" they said.  
Nob Manor cleared and turned his head,  
And cried "Wade up. The ford's up-  
stream."

Ock Gurney in a cloud of steam  
Stood by his dripping cob and wrung  
The taste of brook mud from his tongue  
And scraped his poor cob's pasterns clean.  
"Lord, what a crowner we've a been,  
This jumping brook's a mucky job."  
He muttered, grinning, "Lord, poor cob.  
Now sir, let me." He turned to Squire

And cleared his hunter from the mire  
By skill and sense and strength of arm.

Meanwhile the fox passed Nonesuch Farm,  
Keeping the spinney on his right.  
Hounds raced him here with all their  
might

Along the short firm grass, like fire.  
The cowman viewed him from the byre  
Lolloping on, six fields ahead,  
Then hounds, still carrying such a head,  
It made him stare, then Rob on Pip,  
Sailing the great grass like a ship,  
Then grand Maroon in all his glory  
Sweeping his strides, his great chest hoary  
With foam fleck and the pale hill-marl.  
They strode the Leet, they flew the Snarl,  
They knocked the nuts at Nonesuch Mill,  
Raced up the spur of Gallows Hill  
And viewed him there. The line he took

Was Tineton and the Pantry Brook,  
Going like fun and hounds like mad.  
Tom glanced to see what friends he had  
Still within sight, before he turned  
The ridge's shoulder ; he discerned,  
One field away, young Cothill sailing  
Easily up. Pete Gurney failing,  
Hugh Colway quartering on Sir Peter,  
Bill waiting on the mare to beat her,  
Sal Ridden skirting to the right.  
A horse, with stirrups flashing bright  
Over his head at every stride,  
Looked like the Major's ; Tom espied  
Far back, a scarlet speck of man  
Running, and straddling as he ran.  
Charles Copse was up, Nob Manor fol-  
lowed,  
Then Bennett's big-boned black that wal-  
lowed  
Clumsy, but with the strength of ten.

Then black and brown and scarlet men,  
Brown horses, white and black and grey  
Scattered a dozen fields away.  
The shoulder shut the scene away.

From the Gallows Hill to the Tineton  
Copse

There were ten ploughed fields like ten full  
stops,

All wet red clay where a horse's foot  
Would be swathed, feet thick, like an ash-tree  
root.

The fox raced on, on the headlands firm,  
Where his swift feet scared the coupling  
worm,

The rooks rose raving to curse him raw  
He snarled a sneer at their swoop and caw.  
Then on, then on, down a half ploughed field  
Where a ship-like plough drave glitter-  
keeled,

With a bay horse near and a white horse  
leading,

And a man saying "Zook" and the red earth  
bleeding.

He gasped as he saw the ploughman drop  
The stilts and swear at the team to stop.  
The ploughman ran in his red clay clogs  
Crying "Zick un Towzer ; zick, good dogs."  
A couple of wire-haired lurchers lean  
Arose from his wallet, nosing keen ;  
With a rushing swoop they were on his track,  
Putting chest to stubble to bite his back.  
He swerved from his line with the curs at  
heel,  
The teeth as they missed him clicked like  
steel,  
With a worrying snarl, they quartered on him,  
While the ploughman shouted "Zick ; upon  
him."

The lurcher dogs soon shot their bolt,  
And the fox raced on by the Hazel Holt,

Down the dead grass tilt to the sandstone  
gash

Of the Pantry Brook at Tineton Ash.

The loitering water, flooded full,

Had yeast on its lip like raddled wool,

It was wrinkled over with Arab script

Of eddies that twisted up and slipt.

The stepping stones had a rush about them

So the fox plunged in and swam without them.

He crossed to the cattle's drinking shallow

Firmed up with rush and the roots of mallow,

He wrung his coat from his draggled bones

And romped away for the Sarsen Stones.

A sneaking glance with his ears flexed back,

Made sure that his scent had failed the pack,

For the red clay, good for corn and roses,

Was cold for scent and brought hounds to

noses.

He slackened pace by the Tineton Tree,  
(A vast hollow ash-tree grown in three),  
He wriggled a shake and padded slow,  
Not sure if the hounds were on or no.

A horn blew faint, then he heard the sounds  
Of a cantering huntsman, lifting hounds,  
The ploughman had raised his hat for sign,  
And the hounds were lifted and on his line.  
He heard the splash in the Pantry Brook,  
And a man's voice: "Thiccy's the line he  
took,"

And a clear "Yoi doit" and a whimpering  
quaver,  
Though the lurcher dogs had dulled the  
savour.

The fox went off while the hounds made halt,  
And the horses breathed and the field found  
fault,  
But the whimpering rose to a crying crash



By the hollow ruin of Tineton Ash.  
Then again the kettle drum horse hooves beat,  
And the green blades bent to the fox's feet  
And the cry rose keen not far behind  
Of the "Blood, blood, blood" in the fox-  
hounds' mind.

The fox was strong, he was full of running,  
He could run for an hour and then be cunning,  
But the cry behind him made him chill,  
They were nearer now and they meant to kill.  
They meant to run him until his blood  
Clogged on his heart as his brush with mud,  
Till his back bent up and his tongue hung  
flagging,  
And his belly and brush were filthed from  
dragging.  
Till he crouched stone still, dead-beat and  
dirty,  
With nothing but teeth against the thirty.

And all the way to that blinding end  
He would meet with men and have none his  
friend.

Men to holloa and men to run him,  
With stones to stagger and yells to stun  
him,

Men to head him, with whips to beat him,  
Teeth to mangle and mouths to eat him.

And all the way, that wild high crying,  
To cold his blood with the thought of dying,  
The horn and the cheer, and the drum-like  
thunder,

Of the horse hooves stamping the meadows  
under.

He upped his brush and went with a will  
For the Sarsen Stones on Wan Dyke Hill.

As he ran the meadow by Tineton Church,  
A christening party left the porch,  
They stood stock still as he pounded by,

They wished him luck but they thought he'd  
die.

The toothless babe in his long white coat  
Looked delicate meat, the fox took note ;  
But the sight of them grinning there, pointing  
finger,  
Made him put on steam till he went a stinger.

Past Tineton Church over Tineton Waste,  
With the lolloping ease of a fox's haste,  
The fur on his chest blown dry with the air,  
His brush still up and his cheek-teeth bare.  
Over the Waste where the ganders grazed,  
The long swift lilt of his loping lazed,  
His ears cocked up as his blood ran higher,  
He saw his point, and his eyes took fire.  
The Wan Dyke Hill with its fir tree barren,  
Its dark of gorse and its rabbit warren.  
The Dyke on its heave like a tightened  
girth,

And holes in the Dyke where a fox might  
earth.

He had rabbitted there long months before,  
The earths were deep and his need was sore,  
The way was new, but he took a bearing,  
And rushed like a blown ship billow-sharing.

Off Tineton Common to Tineton Dean,  
Where the wind-hid elders pushed with green ;  
Through the Dean's thin cover across the  
lane,

And up Midwinter to King of Spain.  
Old Joe at digging his garden grounds,  
Said " A fox, being hunted ; where be hounds ?  
O lord, my back, to be young again,  
'Stead a zellin zider in King of Spain.  
O hark, I hear 'em, O sweet, O sweet.  
Why there be redcoat in Gearge's wheat.  
And there be redcoat, and there they gallop.  
Thur go a browncoat down a wallop.

Quick, Ellen, quick, come Susan, fly.  
Here'm hounds. I zeed the fox go by,  
Go by like thunder, go by like blasting,  
With his girt white teeth all looking ghasting.  
Look there come hounds. Hark, hear 'em  
crying,  
Lord, belly to stubble, ain't they flying.  
There's huntsmen, there. The fox come  
past,  
(As I was digging) as fast as fast.  
He's only been gone a minute by;  
A girt dark dog as pert as pye."

Ellen and Susan came out scattering  
Brooms and dustpans till all was clattering;  
They saw the pack come head to foot  
Running like racers nearly mute;  
Robin and Dansey quartering near,  
All going gallop like startled deer.  
A half dozen flitting scarlets shewing

In the thin green Dean where the pines were  
growing.

Black coats and brown coats thrusting and  
spurring

Sending the partridge coveys whirring,  
Then a rattle up hill and a clop up lane,  
It emptied the bar of the King of Spain.

Tom left his cider, Dick left his bitter,  
Granfer James left his pipe and spitter,  
Out they came from the sawdust floor,  
They said, "They'm going." They said "O  
Lor."

The fox raced on, up the Barton Balks,  
With a crackle of kex in the nettle stalks,  
Over Hammond's grass to the dark green line  
Of the larch-wood smelling of turpentine.  
Scratch Steven Larches, black to the sky,  
A sadness breathing with one long sigh,

Grey ghosts of trees under funeral plumes,  
A mist of twig over soft brown glooms.  
As he entered the wood he heard the smacks,  
Chip-jar, of the fir pole feller's axe,  
He swerved to the left to a broad green ride,  
Where a boy made him rush for the further  
side.

He swerved to the left, to the Barton Road,  
But there were the timberers come to load.  
Two timber carts and a couple of carters  
With straps round their knees instead of  
garters.

He swerved to the right, straight down the  
wood,

The carters watched him, the boy hallooed.  
He leaped from the larch wood into tillage,  
The cobbler's garden of Barton village.

The cobbler bent at his wooden foot,  
Beating sprigs in a broken boot ;

He wore old glasses with thick horn rim,  
He scowled at his work for his sight was  
dim.

His face was dingy, his lips were grey,  
From primming sparrowbills day by day;  
As he turned his boot he heard a noise  
At his garden-end and he thought, "It's  
boys."

He saw his cat nip up on the shed,  
Where her back arched up till it touched her  
head,

He saw his rabbit race round and round  
Its little black box three feet from ground.  
His six hens cluckered and flucked to perch,  
"That's boys," said cobbler, "so I'll go  
search."

He reached his stick and blinked in his  
wrath,  
When he saw a fox in his garden path.



The fox swerved left and scrambled out  
Knocking crinked green shells from the  
    Brussels Sprout,  
He scrambled out through the cobbler's  
    paling,  
And up Pill's orchard to Purton's Tailing,  
Across the plough at the top of bent,  
Through the heaped manure to kill his scent,  
Over to Aldams, up to Cappells,  
Past Nursery Lot with its white-washed  
    apples,  
Past Colston's Broom, past Gaunts, past  
    Sheres,  
Past Foxwhelps Oasts with their hooded ears,  
Past Monk's Ash Clerewell, past Beggars  
    Oak,  
Past the great elms blue with the Hinton  
    smoke,  
Along Long Hinton to Hinton Green,  
Where the wind-washed steeple stood serene

With its golden bird still sailing air,  
Past Banner Barton, past Chipping Bare,  
Past Maddings Hollow, down Dundry Dip,  
And up Goose Grass to the Sailing Ship.

The three black firs of the Ship stood still  
On the bare chalk heave of the Dundry Hill,  
The fox looked back as he slackened past  
The scaled red-bole of the mizzen-mast.

There they were coming, mute but swift,  
A scarlet smear in the blackthorn rift,  
A white horse rising, a dark horse flying,  
And the hungry hounds too tense for crying.  
Stormcock leading, his stern spear-straight,  
Racing as though for a piece of plate,  
Little speck horsemen field on field ;  
Then Dansey viewed him and Robin squealed.

At the View Halloo the hounds went frantic,  
Back went Stormcock and up went Antic,

Up went Skylark as Antic sped  
It was zest to blood how they carried head.  
Skylark drooped as Maroon drew by,  
Their hackles lifted, they scored to cry.

The fox knew well, that before they tore  
him,  
They should try their speed on the downs be-  
fore him,  
There were three more miles to the Wan  
Dyke Hill,  
But his heart was high, that he beat them still.  
The wind of the downland charmed his bones  
So off he went for the Sarsen Stones.

The moan of the three great firs in the wind,  
And the Ai of the foxhounds died behind,  
Wind-dapples followed the hill-wind's breath  
On the Kill Down gorge where the Danes  
found death ;

Larks scattered up ; the peewits feeding  
Rose in a flock from the Kill Down Steeding.  
The hare leaped up from her form and  
swerved

Swift left for the Starveall harebell-turved.  
On the wind-bare thorn some longtails prink-  
ing

Cried sweet, as though wind blown glass were  
chinking.

Behind came thudding and loud halloo  
Or a cry from hounds as they came to view.

The pure clean air came sweet to his lungs,  
Till he thought foul scorn of those crying  
tongues,

In a three mile more he would reach the haven  
In the Wan Dyke croaked on by the raven,  
In a three mile more he would make his berth  
On the hard cool floor of a Wan Dyke earth,  
Too deep for spade, too curved for terrier,

With the pride of the race to make rest the  
merrier.

In a three mile more he would reach his  
dream,

So his game heart gulped and he put on steam.

Like a rocket shot to a ship ashore,  
The lean red bolt of his body tore,  
Like a ripple of wind running swift on  
grass,

Like a shadow on wheat when a cloud blows  
past,

Like a turn at the buoy in a cutter sailing,  
When the bright green gleam lips white at  
the railing,

Like the April snake whipping back to sheath,  
Like the gannet's hurtle on fish beneath,  
Like a kestrel chasing, like a sickle reaping,  
Like all things swooping, like all things  
sweeping,

Like a hound for stay, like a stag for swift,  
With his shadow beside like spinning drift.

Past the gibbet-stock all stuck with nails,  
Where they hanged in chains what had hung  
at jails,

Past Ashmundshowe where Ashmund sleeps,  
And none but the tumbling peewit weeps,  
Past Curlew Calling, the gaunt grey corner  
Where the curlew comes as a summer  
mourner,

Past Blowbury Beacon shaking his fleece,  
Where all winds hurry and none brings  
peace,

Then down, on the mile-long green decline  
Where the turf's like spring and the air's like  
wine,

Where the sweeping spurs of the downland  
spill

Into Wan Brook Valley and Wan Dyke Hill.

On he went with a galloping rally  
Past Maesbury Clump for Wan Brook Valley,  
The blood in his veins went romping high  
“Get on, on, on to the earth or die.”  
The air of the downs went purely past,  
Till he felt the glory of going fast,  
Till the terror of death, though there indeed,  
Was lulled for a while by his pride of speed ;  
He was romping away from hounds and hunt,  
He had Wan Dyke Hill and his earth in front,  
In a one mile more when his point was made,  
He would rest in safety from dog or spade ;  
Nose between paws he would hear the shout  
Of the “gone to earth” to the hounds without,  
The whine of the hounds, and their cat feet  
gadding,  
Scratching the earth, and their breath pad-  
padding,  
He would hear the horn call hounds away,  
And rest in peace till another day.

In one mile more he would lie at rest.  
So for one mile more he would go his best.  
He reached the dip at the long droop's end  
And he took what speed he had still to spend.

So down past Maesbury beech clump grey,  
That would not be green till the end of  
May,

Past Arthur's Table, the white chalk boulder,  
Where pasque flowers purple the down's grey  
shoulder

Past Quichelm's Keeping, past Harry's Thorn  
To Thirty Acre all thin with corn.

As he raced the corn towards Wan Dyke  
Brook,

The pack had view of the way he took,  
Robin hallooed from the downland's crest,  
He capped them on till they did their best.  
The quarter mile to the Wan Brook's brink  
Was raced as quick as a man can think.



And here, as he ran to the huntsman's yelling,  
ing,

The fox first felt that the pace was telling,  
His body and lungs seemed all grown old,  
His legs less certain, his heart less bold,  
The hound-noise nearer, the hill slope steeper,  
The thud in the blood of his body deeper,  
His pride in his speed, his joy in the race  
Were withered away, for what use was  
pace?

He had run his best, and the hounds ran  
better.

Then the going worsened, the earth was  
wetter.

Then his brush drooped down till it sometimes  
dragged,

And his fur felt sick and his chest was tagged  
With taggles of mud, and his pads seemed  
lead,

It was well for him he'd an earth ahead.

Down he went to the brook and over,  
Out of the corn and into the clover,  
Over the slope that the Wan Brook drains,  
Past Battle Tump where they earthed the  
Danes,  
Then up the hill that the Wan Dyke rings  
Where the Sarsen Stones stand grand like  
kings.

Seven Sarsens of granite grim,  
As he ran them by they looked at him ;  
As he leaped the lip of their earthen paling  
The hounds were gaining and he was failing.

He passed the Sarsens, he left the spur,  
He pressed up hill to the blasted fir,  
He slipped as he leaped the hedge ; he  
slithered ;  
“He’s mine,” thought Robin. “He’s done ;  
he’s dithered.”

At the second attempt he cleared the fence,  
He turned half right where the gorse was  
dense,

He was leading hounds by a furlong clear.  
He was past his best, but his earth was near.  
He ran up gorse, to the spring of the ramp,  
The steep green wall of the dead men's camp,  
He sidled up it and scampered down  
To the deep green ditch of the dead men's  
town.

Within, as he reached that soft green turf,  
The wind, blowing lonely, moaned like surf,  
Desolate ramparts rose up steep,  
On either side, for the ghosts to keep.  
He raced the trench, past the rabbit warren,  
Close grown with moss which the wind made  
barren,  
He passed the spring where the rushes spread,  
And there in the stones was his earth ahead.

One last short burst upon failing feet,  
There life lay waiting, so sweet, so sweet,  
Rest in a darkness, balm for aches.

The earth was stopped. It was barred with  
stakes.

With the hounds at head so close behind  
He had to run as he changed his mind.  
This earth, as he saw, was stopped, but still  
There was one earth more on the Wan Dyke  
Hill.

A rabbit burrow a furlong on,  
He could kennel there till the hounds were  
gone.

Though his death seemed near he did not  
blench

He upped his brush and he ran the trench.

He ran the trench while the wind moaned  
treble,

Earth trickled down, there were falls of  
pebble.

Down in the valley of that dark gash  
The wind-withered grasses looked like ash.  
Trickles of stones and earth fell down  
In that dark valley of dead men's town.  
A hawk arose from a fluff of feathers,  
From a distant fold came a bleat of wethers.  
He heard no noise from the hounds behind  
But the hill-wind moaning like something  
blind.

He turned the bend in the hill and there  
Was his rabbit-hole with its mouth worn bare,  
But there with a gun tucked under his arm  
Was young Sid Kissop of Purlpits Farm,  
With a white hob ferret to drive the rabbit  
Into a net which was set to nab it.  
And young Jack Cole peered over the wall  
And loosed a pup with a "Z'bite en, Saul,"

The terrier pup attacked with a will,  
So the fox swerved right and away down hill.

Down from the ramp of the Dyke he ran  
To the bracken patch where the gorse began,  
Into the gorse, where the hill's heave hid  
The line he took from the eyes of Sid  
He swerved down wind and ran like a hare  
For the wind-blown spinney below him there.

He slipped from the gorse to the spinney dark  
(There were curled grey growths on the oak  
tree bark)

He saw no more of the terrier pup.  
But he heard men speak and the hounds  
come up.

He crossed the spinney with ears intent  
For the cry of hounds on the way he went  
His heart was thumping, the hounds were  
near now

He could make no sprint at a cry and cheer  
now,

He was past his perfect, his strength was  
failing,

His brush sag-sagged and his legs were  
ailing.

He felt as he skirted Dead Men's Town,  
That in one mile more they would have him  
down.

Through the withered oak's wind-crouching  
tops

He saw men's scarlet above the copse,  
He heard men's oaths, yet he felt hounds  
slacken

In the frondless stalks of the brittle bracken.  
He felt that the unseen link which bound  
His spine to the nose of the leading hound,  
Was snapped, that the hounds no longer knew  
Which way to follow nor what to do ;

That the threat of the hound's teeth left his  
neck,  
They had ceased to run, they had come to  
check,  
They were quartering wide on the Wan Hill's  
bent.

The terrier's chase had killed his scent.

He heard bits chink as the horses shifted,  
He heard hounds cast, then he heard hounds  
lifted,  
But there came no cry from a new attack,  
His heart grew steady, his breath came back.

He left the spinney and ran its edge,  
By the deep dry ditch of the blackthorn  
hedge,  
Then out of the ditch and down the meadow,  
Trotting at ease in the blackthorn shadow



Over the track called Godsdow Road,  
To the great grass heave of the gods' abode,  
He was moving now upon land he knew  
Up Clench Royal and Morton Tew  
The Pol Brook, Cheddesdon and East Stoke  
Church,  
High Clench St. Lawrence and Tinker's  
Birch,  
Land he had roved on night by night,  
For hot blood suckage or furry bite,  
The threat of the hounds behind was gone;  
He breathed deep pleasure and trotted on.

While young Sid Kissop thrashed the pup,  
Robin on Pip came heaving up,  
And found his pack spread out at check.  
“I’d like to wring your terrier’s neck,”  
He said, “You see? He’s spoiled our sport.  
He’s killed the scent.” He broke off short,  
And stared at hounds and at the valley.  
No jay or magpie gave a rally  
Down in the copse, no circling rooks  
Rose over fields; old Joyful’s looks  
Were doubtful in the gorse, the pack  
Quested both up and down and back.  
He watched each hound for each small sign.  
They tried, but could not hit the line,  
The scent was gone. The field took place  
Out of the way of hounds. The pace  
Had tailed them out; though four remained :

Sir Peter, on White Rabbit stained  
Red from the brooks, Bill Ridden cheery,  
Hugh Colway with his mare dead weary.  
The Colonel with Marauder beat.  
They turned towards a thud of feet ;  
Dansey, and then young Cothill came  
(His chestnut mare was galloped tame).  
"There's Copse, a field behind," he said.  
"Those last miles put them all to bed.  
They're strung along the downs like flies."  
Copse and Nob Manor topped the rise.  
"Thank God, a check," they said, "at last."

"They cannot own it ; you must cast,"  
Sir Peter said. The soft horn blew  
Tom turned the hounds up wind ; they drew  
Up wind, down hill, by spinney side.  
They tried the brambled ditch ; they tried  
The swamp, all choked with bright green grass  
And clumps of rush and pools like glass,

Long since, the dead men's drinking pond.  
They tried the White Leaved Oak beyond,  
But no hound spoke to it or feathered.  
The horse heads drooped like horses tethered,  
The men mopped brows. "An hour's hard  
run.

Ten miles," they said, "we must have done.  
It's all of six from Colston's Gorses."  
The lucky got their second horses.

The time ticked by. "He's lost," they  
muttered.

A pheasant rose. A rabbit scuttered.  
Men mopped their scarlet cheeks and drank.

They drew down wind along the bank,  
(The Wan Way) on the hill's south spur,  
Grown with dwarf oak and juniper  
Like dwarves alive, but no hound spoke.  
The seepings made the ground one soak.

They turned the spur ; the hounds were beat.  
Then Robin shifted in his seat  
Watching for signs, but no signs shewed.  
"I'll lift across the Godsdow Road,  
Beyond the spinney," Robin said.  
Tom turned them ; Robin went ahead.

Beyond the copse a great grass fallow  
Stretched towards Stoke and Cheddesdon  
Mallow,  
A rolling grass where hounds grew keen.  
"Yoi doit, then ; this is where he's been,"  
Said Robin, eager at their joy.  
"Yooi, Joyful, lad, yooi, Cornerboy.  
They're on to him."

At his reminders  
The keen hounds hurried to the finders.  
The finding hounds began to hurry,  
Men jammed their hats prepared to skurry,  
The Ai Ai of the cry began.

Its spirit passed to horse and man,  
The skirting hounds romped to the cry.  
Hound after hound cried Ai Ai Ai,  
Till all were crying, running, closing,  
Their heads well up and no heads nosing,  
Joyful ahead with spear-straight stern.  
They raced the great slope to the burn.  
Robin beside them, Tom behind,  
Pointing past Robin down the wind.

For there, two furlongs on, he viewed  
On Holy Hill or Cheddesdon Rood  
Just where the ploughland joined the grass,  
A speck down the first furrow pass,  
A speck the colour of the plough.  
"Yonder he goes. We'll have him now,"  
He cried. The speck passed slowly on,  
It reached the ditch, paused, and was gone.

Then down the slope and up the Rood,  
Went the hunt's gallop. Godsdow Wood

Dropped its last oak-leaves at the rally.  
Over the Rood to High Clench Valley  
The gallop led ; the red-coats scattered,  
The fragments of the hunt were tattered  
Over five fields, ev'n since the check.  
"A dead fox or a broken neck,"  
Said Robin Dawe, "Come up, the Dane."  
The hunter leant against the rein,  
Cocking his ears, he loved to see  
The hounds at cry. The hounds and he  
The chiefs in all that feast of pace.  
  
The speck in front began to race.

The fox heard hounds get on to his line,  
And again the terror went down his spine,  
Again the back of his neck felt cold,  
From the sense of the hound's teeth taking  
    hold.

But his legs were rested, his heart was good,  
He had breath to gallop to Mourn End  
    Wood,  
It was four miles more, but an earth at end,  
So he put on pace down the Rood Hill Bend.

Down the great grass slope which the oak  
    trees dot  
With a swerve to the right from the keeper's  
    cot,  
Over High Clench brook in its channel deep,  
To the grass beyond, where he ran to sheep.



The sheep formed line like a troop of horse,  
They swerved, as he passed, to front his course  
From behind, as he ran, a cry arose,  
“See the sheep, there. Watch them. There  
he goes.”

He ran the sheep that their smell might check  
The hounds from his scent and save his neck,  
But in two fields more he was made aware  
That the hounds still ran; Tom had viewed  
him there.

Tom had held them on through the taint of  
sheep,  
They had kept his line, as they meant to keep,  
They were running hard with a burning scent,  
And Robin could see which way he went.  
The pace that he went brought strain to  
breath,  
He knew as he ran that the grass was death.

He ran the slope towards Morton Tew  
That the heave of the hill might stop the  
view,

Then he doubled down to the Blood Brook  
red,  
And swerved upstream in the brook's deep  
bed.

He splashed the shallows, he swam the deeps,  
He crept by banks as a moorhen creeps,  
He heard the hounds shoot over his line,  
And go on, on, on towards Cheddesdon Zine.

In the minute's peace he could slacken speed,  
The ease from the strain was sweet indeed.  
Cool to the pads the water flowed,  
He reached the bridge on the Cheddesdon  
road.

As he came to light from the culvert dim,  
Two boys on the bridge looked down on him ;

They were young Bill Ripple and Harry  
Meun,

"Look, there be squirrel, a-swimmin', see  
'un."

"Noa, ben't a squirrel, be fox, be fox.

Now, Hal, get pebble, we'll give en socks."

"Get pebble, Billy, dub un a plaster ;  
There's for thy belly, I'll learn ee, master."

The stones splashed spray in the fox's  
eyes,

He raced from brook in a burst of shies,

He ran for the reeds in the withy car,

Where the dead flags shake and the wild-  
duck are.

He pushed through the reeds which cracked  
at his passing,

To the High Clench Water, a grey pool glass-  
ing,

He heard Bill Ripple in Cheddesdon road,  
Shout, "This way, huntsman, it's here he  
goed."

The Leu Leu Leu went the soft horn's laugh-  
ter,  
The hounds (they had checked) came romp-  
ing after,  
The clop of the hooves on the road was plain,  
Then the crackle of reeds, then cries again.

A whimpering first, then Robin's cheer,  
Then the Ai Ai Ai; they were all too near;  
His swerve had brought but a minute's rest  
Now he ran again, and he ran his best.

With a crackle of dead dry stalks of reed  
The hounds came romping at topmost speed  
The redcoats ducked as the great hooves  
skittered

The Blood Brook's shallows to sheets that  
glittered ;  
With a cracking whip and a "Hoik, Hoik,  
Hoik,  
Forrard," Tom galloped. Bob shouted  
"Yoick."

Like a running fire the dead reeds crackled  
The hounds' heads lifted, their necks were  
hackled.

Tom cried to Bob as they thundered  
through,  
"He is running short, we shall kill at  
Tew."

Bob cried to Tom as they rode in team,  
"I was sure, that time, that he turned up-  
stream.

As the hounds went over the brook in stride,  
I saw old Daffodil fling to side,  
So I guessed at once, when they checked  
beyond."

The ducks flew up from the Morton Pond.  
The fox looked up at their tailing strings,  
He wished (perhaps) that a fox had wings.  
Wings with his friends in a great V straining  
The autumn sky when the moon is gaining ;  
For better the grey sky's solitude,  
Than to be two miles from the Mourne End  
Wood

With the hounds behind, clean-trained to run,  
And your strength half spent and your breath  
half done.

Better the reeds and the sky and water  
Than that hopeless pad from a certain  
slaughter.

At the Morton Pond the fields began,  
Long Tew's green meadows ; he ran ; he ran.

First the six green fields that make a mile,  
With the lip-full Clench at the side the while,  
With the rooks above, slow-circling, shewing

The world of men where a fox was going ;  
The fields all empty, dead grass, bare hedges,  
And the brook's bright gleam in the dark of  
sedges.

To all things else he was dumb and blind,  
He ran, with the hounds a field behind.

At the sixth green field came the long slow  
climb,

To the Mourne End Wood as old as time  
Yew woods dark, where they cut for bows,  
Oak woods green with the mistletoes,  
Dark woods evil, but burrowed deep  
With a brock's earth strong, where a fox  
might sleep.

He saw his point on the heaving hill,  
He had failing flesh and a reeling will,  
He felt the heave of the hill grow stiff,  
He saw black woods, which would shelter —  
If —

Nothing else, but the steepening slope,  
And a black line nodding, a line of hope  
The line of the yews on the long slope's brow,  
A mile, three-quarters, a half-mile now.  
A quarter-mile, but the hounds had viewed  
They yelled to have him this side the wood,  
Robin capped them, Tom Dansey steered  
them

With a "Yooi, Yooi, Yooi," Bill Ridden  
cheered them.

Then up went hackles as Shatterer led,  
"Mob him," cried Ridden, "the wood's  
ahead.

Turn him, damn it; Yooi, beauties, beat him,  
O God, let them get him; let them eat him.  
O God," said Ridden, "I'll eat him stewed,  
If you'll let us get him this side the wood."

But the pace, uphill, made a horse like stone,  
The pack went wild up the hill alone.



Three hundred yards, and the worst was  
past,

The slope was gentler and shorter-grassed,  
The fox saw the bulk of the woods grow tall  
On the brae ahead like a barrier-wall.

He saw the skeleton trees show sky,  
And the yew trees darken to see him die  
And the line of the woods go reeling black  
There was hope in the woods, and behind,  
the pack.

Two hundred yards, and the trees grew taller,  
Blacker, blinder, as hope grew smaller  
Cry seemed nearer, the teeth seemed gripping  
Pulling him back, his pads seemed slipping.  
He was all one ache, one gasp, one thirsting,  
Heart on his chest-bones, beating, bursting  
The hounds were gaining like spotted pards  
And the wood-hedge still was a hundred  
yards.

The wood-hedge black was a two year,  
quick

Cut-and-laid that had sprouted thick  
Thorns all over, and strongly plied,  
With a clean red ditch on the take-off side.

He saw it now as a redness, topped  
With a wattle of thorn-work spiky cropped,  
Spiky to leap on, stiff to force,  
No safe jump for a failing horse,  
But beyond it, darkness of yews together,  
Dark green plumes over soft brown feather,  
Darkness of woods where scents were blowing  
Strange scents, hot scents, of wild things  
going,  
Scents that might draw these hounds away.  
So he ran, ran, ran to that clean red clay.

Still, as he ran, his pads slipped back,  
All his strength seemed to draw the pack,

The trees drew over him dark like Norns,  
He was over the ditch and at the thorns.

He thrust at the thorns, which would not  
yield,  
He leaped, but fell, in sight of the field,  
The hounds went wild as they saw him fall,  
The fence stood stiff like a Bucks flint wall.

He gathered himself for a new attempt,  
His life before was an old dream dreamt,  
All that he was was a blown fox quaking,  
Jumping at thorns too stiff for breaking,  
While over the grass in crowd, in cry,  
Came the grip teeth grinning to make him  
die,

The eyes intense, dull, smouldering red,  
The fell like a ruff round each keen head,  
The pace like fire, and scarlet men  
Galloping, yelling, "Yooi, eat him, then."

He gathered himself, he leaped, he reached  
The top of the hedge like a fish-boat beached  
He steadied a second and then leaped down  
To the dark of the wood where bright things  
drown.

He swerved, sharp right, under young green  
firs.

Robin called on the Dane with spurs,  
He cried "Come, Dansey: if God's not  
good,  
We shall change our fox in this Mourne End  
Wood."

Tom cried back as he charged like spate,  
"Mine can't jump that, I must ride to gate."  
Robin answered, "I'm going at him.  
I'll kill that fox, if he kills me, drat him.  
We'll kill in covert. Gerr on, now, Dane."  
He gripped him tight and he made it plain,  
He slowed him down till he almost stood

While his hounds went crash into Mourn  
End Wood.

Like a dainty dancer with footing nice,  
The Dane turned side for a leap in twice.  
He cleared the ditch to the red clay bank,  
He rose at the fence as his quarters sank,  
He barged the fence as the bank gave way  
And down he came in a fall of clay.

Robin jumped off him and gasped for  
breath ;

He said "That's lost him as sure as death.  
They've over-run him. Come up, the Dane,  
But I'll kill him yet, if we ride to Spain."

He scrambled up to his horse's back,  
He thrust through cover, he called his pack,  
He cheered them on till they made it good,  
Where the fox had swerved inside the wood.

The fox knew well as he ran the dark,  
That the headlong hounds were past their  
mark

They had missed his swerve and had over-  
run.

But their devilish play was not yet done.

For a minute he ran and heard no sound,  
Then a whimper came from a questing hound,  
Then a "This way, beauties," and then "Leu  
Leu,"

The floating laugh of the horn that blew.  
Then the cry again and the crash and rattle  
Of the shrubs burst back as they ran to battle.  
Till the wood behind seemed risen from root,  
Crying and crashing to give pursuit,  
Till the trees seemed hounds and the air  
seemed cry,

And the earth so far that he needs but die,  
Die where he reeled in the woodland dim

With a hound's white grips in the spine of  
him ;

For one more burst he could spurt, and then  
Wait for the teeth, and the wrench, and men.

He made his spurt for the Mourne End rocks,  
The air blew rank with the taint of fox ;  
The yews gave way to a greener space  
Of great stones strewn in a grassy place.  
And there was his earth at the great grey  
shoulder,  
Sunk in the ground, of a granite boulder  
A dry deep burrow with rocky roof,  
Proof against crowbars, terrier-proof,  
Life to the dying, rest for bones.

The earth was stopped ; it was filled with  
stones.

Then, for a moment, his courage failed,  
His eyes looked up as his body quailed,

Then the coming of death, which all things  
dread,  
Made him run for the wood ahead.

The taint of fox was rank on the air,  
He knew, as he ran, there were foxes there.  
His strength was broken, his heart was burst-  
ing  
His bones were rotten his throat was thirsting  
His feet were reeling, his brush was thick  
From dragging the mud, and his brain was  
sick.

He thought as he ran of his old delight  
In the wood in the moon in an April night,  
His happy hunting, his winter loving,  
The smells of things in the midnight roving;  
The look of his dainty-nosing, red  
Clean-felled dam with her footpad's tread,  
Of his sire, so swift, so game, so cunning



With craft in his brain and power of running,  
Their fights of old when his teeth drew blood.  
Now he was sick, with his coat all mud.

He crossed the covert, he crawled the bank,  
To a meuse in the thorns and there he sank,  
With his ears flexed back and his teeth shown  
white,  
In a rat's resolve for a dying bite.

And there, as he lay, he saw the vale,  
That a struggling sunlight silvered pale,  
The Deerlip Brook like a strip of steel,  
The Nun's Wood Yews where the rabbits  
squeal,

The great grass square of the Roman Fort,  
And the smoke in the elms at Crendon Court.

And above the smoke in the elm-tree tops,  
Was the beech-clump's blue, Blown Hilcote  
Copse;

Where he and his mates had long made  
merry

In the bloody joys of the rabbit-herry.

And there as he lay and looked, the cry  
Of the hounds at head came rousing by ;  
He bent his bones in the blackthorn dim.

But the cry of the hounds was not for him  
Over the fence with a crash they went,  
Belly to grass, with a burning scent,  
Then came Dansey, yelling to Bob,  
“They’ve changed, O damn it, now here’s a  
job.”

And Bob yelled back, “Well, we cannot turn  
’em,

It’s Jumper and Antic, Tom ; we’ll learn ’em.  
We must just go on, and I hope we kill.”

They followed hounds down the Mourne  
End Hill.

■

The fox lay still in the rabbit-meuse,  
On the dry brown dust of the plumes of yews.  
In the bottom below a brook went by,  
Blue, in a patch, like a streak of sky.  
There, one by one, with a clink of stone  
Came a red or dark coat on a horse half blown.  
And man to man with a gasp for breath  
Said, "Lord, what a run. I'm fagged to  
death."

After an hour, no riders came,  
The day drew by like an ending game;  
A robin sang from a pufft red breast,  
The fox lay quiet and took his rest.  
A wren on a tree-stump carolled clear,  
Then the starlings wheeled in a sudden  
sheer,  
The rooks came home to the twiggy hive  
In the elm-tree tops which the winds do drive.  
Then the noise of the rooks fell slowly still,

And the lights came out in the Clench Brook  
Mill

Then a pheasant cocked, then an owl began  
With the cry that curdles the blood of man.

The stars grew bright as the yews grew black,  
The fox rose stiffly and stretched his back.  
He flaired the air, then he padded out  
To the valley below him dark as doubt,  
Winter-thin with the young green crops,  
For Old Cold Crendon and Hilcote Copse.

As he crossed the meadows at Naunton Lark-  
ing,

The dogs in the town all started barking,  
For with feet all bloody and flanks all foam,  
The hounds and the hunt were limping home ;  
Limping home in the dark, dead-beaten,  
The hounds all rank from a fox they'd eaten,  
Dansey saying to Robin Dawe,

"The fastest and longest I ever saw."

And Robin answered, "O Tom, 'twas good,  
I thought they'd changed in the Mourne End  
Wood,

But now I feel that they did not change.

We've had a run that was great and  
strange ;

And to kill in the end, at dusk, on grass.

We'll turn to the Cock and take a glass,  
For the hounds, poor souls, are past their  
forces.

And a gallon of ale for our poor horses,  
And some bits of bread for the hounds, poor  
things,

After all they've done (for they've done like  
kings),

Would keep them going till we get in.

We had it alone from Nun's Wood Whin."

Then Tom replied, "If they changed or  
not,

There've been few runs longer and none more  
hot,

We shall talk of to-day until we die."

The stars grew bright in the winter sky,  
The wind came keen with a tang of frost,  
The brook was troubled for new things lost,  
The copse was happy for old things found,  
The fox came home and he went to ground.

And the hunt came home and the hounds were  
fed,

They climbed to their bench and went to bed,  
The horses in stable loved their straw.

"Good-night, my beauties," said Robin  
Dawe.

Then the moon came quiet and flooded full  
Light and beauty on clouds like wool,  
On a feasted fox at rest from hunting,

In the beech wood grey where the brocks  
were grunting.

The beech wood grey rose dim in the night  
With moonlight fallen in pools of light,  
The long dead leaves on the ground were  
rimed.

A clock struck twelve and the church-bells  
chimed.



















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